

Horizon

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

SAVED FROM THE SALVAGE

by LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

LETTER TO MY SON

by OSBERT SITWELL

PAINTING IS A WAGER

by ANDRÉ MASSON

INTERMENT OF A LITERARY MAN

by PHILIP TOYNBEE

PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE FUTURE

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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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between pages 180 and 181

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KENNETH GEE

FIVE SONNETS FROM A
SEQUENCE

I

History's truth always arrives too late.
Only the dream warns: sway on its tide
Buoys of terror with their iron-mouthed bells
That are tolling for those who have already died
When we awake. Bone bears no tale of pain.
The ritual drum beats in a stranger's land,
Makes riding minutes no more urgent yet
To break the glass down in a rain of sand.
Only a fathomed question darkens noon's
Blaze for a moment packed with evil, tells
The way wounds in the olive field grow bright
Like stars, and red runs in among the maize.
And from the headline armies spring real men
Whom the horn blows for and worms take tonight.

II

Tomorrow mirrored in this noonday dream
Chills the fanning wind; my fingers ache
For bitter minutes in a birdless winter
Of sorrow, where the frosted sedges shake
And through the ruined temples of the clouds
Drifts in crystal pattern the silent snow
That locks the earth and binds the contours down
To a blind level where no thought can grow.
And deep in my night's wood, by riven trees,
Whose bird's-claw roots are sunk in lakes of pain,
Winds mourn for men within their cage,
And weather winds its ice around their guilt;
Their speech is stilled, and on the midnight turns
The wheel that pivots on the heart of rage.

III

Or in my sleep a gleaming mirror tilts
To tell me tales that are deceit's delights
Changed for my losses and day's sharp assaults
Against my brittle safety. The glass invites
Me to the beaches of an island summer
Where the waves sidle, always under sun,

Guiding and buoyant for the gold-limbed swimmer
 Over full fathoms where sea-shells are spun.
 Collected from the shore, these drop their bells
 Down through my thoughts, and lay like mines
 Fable and legend in my mind's smudged mirror
 That wants no moment's truth now, only wills
 Longer the reaches of the night that hold
 This beauty flowering in the blind dream's error.

IV

Day lifts. The lark breaks cloud for sun
 Or drops like stone to tell today brings rain
 From the pale west where lies the fading moon
 That rode across my night, crater and plain
 Shading its disc like markings on moths' wings.
 Again I shall pick the minutes over, praise
 Time's groves for blooms, recall old wrongs,
 Finger the wounds and pleasures of my days,
 Their patterns changing through today. Day lifts,
 And noon returns, to rub the beggar's hand
 Insistently against my cleaner sleeve
 For charity. And giving will not mend
 What's on the paper scraps the wind shifts:
 Words are lies, and tell the way we live.

V

The wind searches in crevices, sings over
 The spider's trembling web, and the trees shake
 Their leaves out in a million flags of sound;
 Horizons melt into the sun's lake.
 Walls the weather plays on, where my hand
 Has touched the nerve of evil buried, break
 Open for a moment to discover
 Springs of music I could never wake
 Alone. . . The orchards of my early time
 Drown under tides that shape my binding world
 Where I grew tall among the cruel and mad.
 But innocence can still survive the child,
 Beyond clown's faces and the gunman's dream
 That calls through cells of cunning to the dead.

LOUIS MACNEICE

THE TWINS

When Hawkeye and Dogfoot were born
The apple-tree caught on fire and the sun blew on his horn,
And when their mother gave suck
Dogfoot said to Hawkeye: 'Surely we are in luck,'
But when they both were weaned
Hawkeye looked insulted and Dogfoot looked chagrined.
Dogfoot was a lad of great strength
And Hawkeye's eyes could see to an almost unheard-of length,
Therefore their father and mother
Put them both in an office where they should be no bother.
One day the bugle blew,
Hawkeye took his hat from the peg and Dogfoot, too;
So Hawkeye and Dogfoot went out,
Though neither of them knew exactly what the uproar was about.
When Hawkeye and Dogfoot were killed
Their father said to their mother: 'It is as God willed.'
But their bodies could not be found,
So neither Dogfoot nor Hawkeye lies in sacred ground.
When next such twins are born
The apple-tree will be cinders and the sun will have lost his horn.

D. S. SAVAGE

EARTH

Earth is the element of which we are made,
Earth sodden and sagging, earth dogged and dull,
Earth clodding on cart-wheel, earth clogging on spade,
Earth dragging us down with its dreadful pull.

As cottages from quarries of neighbouring stone
We are built in our bodies and mortared with mud,
We are bolted with bones on a framework of bone
And filled with a plaster of flesh and blood.

Earth that is our enemy and our seeming friend,
Earth that is our fortune and our fearful fate,
Earth sweet at beginning and sour at the end,
And the everyday porridge on our earthen plate:

This earth is the forehead and the fragile hair,
The frangible fingers and the flattened toes,
The whirl of the eye and the whorl of the ear,
The curl of the mouth and the quirk of the nose.

And earth our master and our sometime slave,
The measure of love and the meaning of lust,
Is the womb of our birth and the wall of our grave,
The dust of our self and the self of our dust.

Earth is the substance in which we inhere,
Earth hollow and hungry, earth fattened and full,
Earth clotting the tongue and earth caulking the ear,
Earth dragging us down with its dreadful pull.

LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

SAVED FROM THE SALVAGE

I—DONNA VIOLANTE

I

WHEN not long ago an appeal was made for waste paper, I threw down the stairs of my bombed house a mass of old letters: I, too, wanted to do what I could to beat Hitler. Before the Borough Council van arrived, however, I luckily looked to see whether there were any papers that it might be wise to save from this patriotic pulping. So many letters did I find from deceased persons, that I almost felt like the old Major who was heard in his Club to mutter, 'all my friends, God damn them! are dead'. Some of the letters I put aside; and I put aside also a little packet of verses written in Venice at the end of the nineteenth century; verses which had now and then, since that date,

glimmered in my thoughts and had left behind them a kind of fragrance. In one of such reminiscential moments (when or where I have no notion) I wrote, and tied up with the packet, a little account of how they had come into my possession. That packet, thus saved from the salvage, I am sending to Cyril, daring him to print, among the raucous cries of his young lions, something so out of date, so out of fashion as this sigh from the eighteen-nineties.

II

Readers of that little masterpiece, the *Aspern Papers* (so I said in my Introduction), will remember the search for unpublished poems of Shelley's, which was suggested to Henry James, when, walking one day with Vernon Lee in Florence, she had pointed out the shuttered windows of a big house, behind which shutters, she said, the mother of Byron's Allegra was living. She told him how the painter, John Sargent, would relate that as a boy he attended a dancing-class in this palace; and when one day the pianist didn't turn up, the dancing-master was informed that there was an old lady living on the top floor who played the piano, and would be willing, no doubt, to come down (as she did) and thump out music for the children to dance to. This old lady was Claire Clairemont, who at that time dwelt in Florence on a pittance bequeathed her by Shelley; and was, appropriately enough, contemplating (her biographer, Richard Garnett, tells us) writing a book, to illustrate from the lives of two famous poets 'the dangers and evils resulting from erroneous opinions on the subject of the relations between the sexes'. Such a survival from the age of Queen Caroline of Brunswick and Mrs. Siddons of Byron's mistress, whom, gossip reported, the inflammable Shelley also loved, had evoked in the novelist's imagination the figure of the young researcher who rents rooms in the big house of this aged person, in hopes of getting the sight—and perhaps the possession—of letters and poems by Shelley he believes she is jealously hoarding.

The scene of his tale Henry James transfers to Venice—to a dilapidated palace in a derelict corner of that city. The picture he gives of this setting is one which no reader of the *Aspern Papers* can easily forget. I certainly can't forget it; I have, moreover, a personal reason not to, since not long after the story was written, a letter of introduction gave me the key of admission

to that almost inaccessible palace. Often, during the winter of 1897 and 1898, I would ring the deep-resounding bell at its portals. From above a face would peer down, and a voice would call out in the soft Venetian dialect,

Chi xe?

Amici! I would answer; and then the portals would be pulled ajar by a rusty wire from above; and crossing an immense, damp lower hall, I would ascend the high stairway to where a marble halting-place, strewn with rose-leaves, was spread before the great baroque door of the grandest floor of the palace. Here I would ring another bell; and the smiling maid, whose voice I had heard already, would admit me into an immense sala, which seemed to stretch almost half a mile into the shadowy distance. As I paced between walls adorned with faded escutcheons and old portraits in shabby frames, and saw at its further end a group of shadowy people, I would begin to taste what is to me one of the most delightful of all sensations—the sensation of actually living inside a Henry James story.

The table at which I would find four or five persons seated would be ablaze with rare flowers, but not over-lavishly furnished, I could perceive, with preparations for tea. This glory of flowers amid somewhat shabby surroundings would give the note, the atmosphere, and, to use the appropriate Italian word, the *chiaroscuro* of the story I had floated into.

The people assembled there appeared in my youthful eyes distinguished persons; and now that I recall them, I feel still more that they were worthy of note. The bent, half-crippled and very old hostess who poured out for me a cup of the most exquisite tea I had ever tasted, was, I believe, a lady of French birth; the daughter, it was said, of a famous Calvinist theologian. She had married an English evangelist, and had gone with him to the Middle West of America, whence, scandal reported, she had eloped with the Baptist Minister of her small town in that region. After many years of Italian wanderings the guilty pair (guilty according to small-town notions) had settled in Venice, renting for the smallest of rents, the *piano nobile* of this palace. Like the pair of imaginary American ladies whom Henry James had placed there, this real pair (and I was almost sure they were real) lived, as far as was known, on little or nothing, for there was practically nothing to live on.

Certainly the elderly, bald, ex-Baptist minister (if such had once been his vocation) who handed me my cup of tea, couldn't, people said in Venice, earn much from the art of painting he had unsuccessfully adopted. To what other shifts this couple was put for the support of their aged existence was a question, as I found, often discussed, not without malice, in the Anglo-American society of Venice, none of whose leaders, neither Lady Grimditch of the Palazzo Barbarigo, nor Mr. and Mrs. Beddington-Booth of the Brandolin Palace (originally from Utica, U.S.A.), ever called on these outlaws; nor would the exclusive Miss Moanes of the Zattere sit down at that table. But there was often to be found a personage who, in his turn, wouldn't cross their Anglo-American thresholds. Rank and worldly position (and his happened to be the highest in Venice) are vain things, moralists teach us; but when combined with the civility of the best Austrian culture (and what civility is more polished than that?) made delightful the company and conversation of so modest a magnifico of Vienna and Venice. This inheritor of the Duino Castle on the Adriatic (a castle afterwards made famous by the poet Rilke) was at this time living on the Grand Canal with a most enchanting Italian lady. His Highness¹ couldn't marry her, some said, for reasons of state; but his real reason, he once told me in confidence, was that both he and the signora dreaded that rush to call on them of Lady Grimditch, Mrs. Beddington-Booth and the exclusive Miss Moanes: an invasion which would follow any legal ceremony, and force him to throw himself into the Grand Canal.

Then the doorbell of the *piano nobile* might ring again; the little maid would announce *Il Marchese*; and the Wicked Baronet (of whom I have formerly written) would enter. When the maid's employers told her that Sir Peregrine wasn't a Marquis: '*Mi pari*', she would reply, 'to me he seems a Marchese'; and thus would she always name him. Indeed, to any Venetian he might seem like a Marchese who had survived from the time of Casanova.

Il Signorino Smitti would be welcomed as a friend of Vernon

¹ Prince Frédéric de Hohenlohe-Waldenburg published in Paris (1902) a little book of essays entitled *Impressions*, in one of which, entitled *Floréale*, he describes this old palace, and dedicates it to Donna Violante, as we called her, the aged Pilgrim, as she called herself, who lived there.

Lee's, and a young person who had some knowledge of how to grow flowers.

III

The talk at that tea-table would be about people, about books, about the cultivation of the mind, or the cultivation of flowers; and then quite often there in the twilight towards dusk the finest flower of life (at least so I consider it), Good Talk, would begin to unfold its great petals. 'The conversation of lofty Talkers', (according to a Chinese saying) 'is one of the four pleasures of the rational life'; and that pleasure I would certainly taste on such occasions. Naturally, therefore, I loved to witness the 'explication' of this great water-lily, this *Victoria Regia*, whose roots were deep-embedded in the midden and old gilded mud of Venice. To me, if I may allow myself a metaphorical transition, such auditions would seem like listening to a concert of skilful performers, each playing his instrument in harmony, or in harmonious conflict, with the others, and thus producing a richness of music never heard on American or English social occasions, since Anglo-Saxon ladies prefer the thin duets in which each feels she can play her own part with credit. The charm of listening to General Conversation is a felicity of which, unlike the ladies of France, they have had no experience. If there is any danger of it, after dinner, they rise and leave the room in a body.

IV

Our French hostess, like a queen of an old French Salon, ruled and regulated the talk. If the baton in her gnarled old fist would gleam sometimes like a knife, it was war to the knife, we would remember, between her and Lady Grimditch, the conjugal pair of the Brandolin Palace, and the exclusive Miss Moanes, whose treatment of her as an outlaw we resented. Should she accelerate, as she now and then would accelerate (but not often) the *tempo* rather violently, the rest of us, the Baptist, the Prince, the Baronet and the Signorino would prance round her as in a cannibals' dance, with an abandon which made other meetings with our predestined victims in Venice seem rather insipid; the dull dinners at Lady Grimditch's, or vapid tea-parties with the exclusive Miss Moanes.

With invitations to the freer festivals of malice and music, would be sent me sometimes little poems which the incredible

old lady had penned with a quill as she sat in a half-ruined temple at the end of her great untidy garden. On the pediment of this temple stood pagan, nude, decayed, gesticulating statues; over them peeped the belfry of a little convent of life-renouncing nuns, *sepolte vive*, as they were popularly called, virgins who were immured in that convent for life and never left its precincts. In this ruined temple, amid these old-world surroundings, the old pilgrim would write flowery verses—verses which I feared at first would seem as faded as the meditations that sweet old ladies like to rhyme in old-world English gardens. As a matter of fact, I found them lovely—as lovely as bird-songs, as fragrant as roses. Old and angry with Society as she was, this ‘Violet’, as she signed her verses, this ‘Donna Violante’, as we called her, was something much more than a sweet old lady. She was a creature of fire; in her withered face her great magical eyes would flash with malice and fun; with a bold calligraphy that would have made her famous in China, she would dash down on paper the passion, the pathos, the joy of a heart that couldn’t grow old.

V

As to who this old lady and her old lover were, what penuries and humiliations had accompanied their love-story, and by what forced loans and rapacities, perhaps, they had repaired and avenged them (and Lady Grimditch used to hint at such things in a way that made me hope that she had herself been one of their victims); what were their real names, and whether (as the exclusive Miss Moanes would wonder and whisper) they were legally man and wife—in these matters I took no overwhelming interest. Almost all the foreign inhabitants of this stony city seemed to live in glass houses, and spend their time in throwing Venetian mud at each other. What really interested me—and interests me still—is the question of the enduring value of these recovered verses. Are the gleams that I found—and still find—in their depths the gleams of indestructible rubies? Are the roses she sings of as unfading and still fragrant as Melcager’s, the Greek anthologist’s, ‘lover-loving’ roses?

VI

Well, this is my story, all composed, as are Henry James’s later stories, of memories, surmises, of appearances, of relations;—

and of abysses; of misgivings also, which of themselves add to their interest. The story must fade away, of course, in a mist of doubt and conjecture. Amid this fog, however, a will-o'-the-wisp may wander and vanish; and such a gleam my dark lanthorn can shed for a moment. But of the beauty and value of French verses, how can I pretend to be a judge? On these I have never received an expert's opinion. Indeed, as far as I know, only one of them has ever been printed, and that one in a list, compiled years ago by the late Philip Morrell, of the works of the famous artist in fine needlework, in decoration, in life, his mother, Mrs. Frederick Morrell, of Black Hall. I must have quoted to this Oxford friend of mine one of these quatrains, and she had worked it in needlework round a vase of roses, designed by herself. Almost all of us, Santayana says, are habitually insensible to beauty; only faintly and in rare moments does it smile even upon its adorers. To Harriette Morrell such moments were moments of ecstacy; the thrill and tremble which she felt in the presence of Beauty affected her almost like heart-attacks; she would become breathless, flush and turn pale. Her taste was delicate, prompt, unreasoned; a taste all her own, and quite unaffected by contemporary fashion. But have we not met this lady, 'fresh and fair, young in the 'fifties', between the cover of Henry James's story about her? Read, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, how, with her passion for the exquisite, tragic in its intensity, with her genius, her limited resources but almost infernal cunning, she had made of her old house a small dream palace of perfection. 'But I wouldn't have burnt the house down!' she would protest, when the crime of arson would flare up, as somehow it too often did in that garden. 'But no one says you did, even the author doesn't say so,' we would answer. Then, blushing in silence as if guilty, she would go on stitching together (as I have tried to stitch them) these stories of Venice and Poynton. In her English garden she had read the verses written in that garden in Venice; she had read them and liked them. If I have erred in my estimation of their value, I am quite content to have erred in that company. Whether the leaders of this week's fashion will share in our tastes I have no notion. Here, at any rate, are the verses; the first I give with the vase Mrs. Morrell designed to adorn it. The last two are printed as as they were penned by Donna Violante.



II

Mon vieux Jardin est parfumé,
Parfumé d'Amour et de Roses,
Dans un Rêve, j'y suis bercée,
Dans un Rêve, je m'y repose.

Mais sous mes pieds tout, tout, chancelle,
Et l'Horizon reste caché.
Oh mon Jardin! sois moi fidèle,
Donne, ce que tu m'as donné!

III

C'est le Temps, c'est le Temps,
Qui fane toute chose,
Le Bouton le plus blanc,
Et la plus blanche Rose,
Qui arrache la Fleur,
Et plante la Douleur.

IV

Je vois tomber la feuille,
Le Vent va l'émporter.
C'est l'Été qui défeuille
Et, me jette un Baiser.

V

Rose fleurie!
Oh, Volupté!
Ta courte Vie
N'est-que Beauté!

VI

(On seeing a bird at dawn flying before my window.)

Petit oiseau, en traversant l'Espace,
Tu jette un cri, et, sans laisser de trace,
Au loin tu disparaissais,
Sans revenir jamais.

Nous, comme toi, d'une aile trop rapide,
Attirés sans repos, vers l'inconnu avide,
Sans creuser un sillon
Nous Volons! nous Volons!

VII

Un cri! et il s'élance,
L'Amour l'a appelé.
Vois! la branche balance
Sous l'Amour nouveau-né!

Tout se fait! Le murmure
Des baisers ou du Vent,
Dans l'Antique Nature,
Ne dure qu'un instant.

VIII

Qu'êtes vous devenus
Rêves de ma Jeunesse?
Oh, doux moments d'ivresse
Pour toujours disparus!

IX

A genoux, devant la Nature,
A toi, Venus, je te murmure
Ma Prière et mon Desir,
D'Amour de vivre, ou mourir!

Rose! à ma Rose Va dire
Mon doux secret;
Puisque, ce que je sésire,
me rend muet!

in the garden.

De l'odeur de la Terre
L'Eternel, Grand Mystère,
Toujours, me fait rêver!
C'est, le Touchant, message
De l'Inconnu évangé,
Ou je vais aborder!

OSBERT SITWELL

LETTER TO MY SON

MY DEAR BOY,

One thing, at any rate, we share in common—an uncommon laziness. We both of us, I know, hate writing letters—especially long letters. You will, therefore, when you count these pages, at once comprehend how much energy it required for me to make this effort to overcome that mutual diffidence upon which, I fully realise, a sound father-and-son relationship must rest. But some apology from me is surely due to you for the condition of the world in which you find yourself—more especially because, even before you were born, I foresaw the probability that the present conflict would ensue. And, above all, I feel that you should know what I *really* think upon a number of matters, for, when we meet, the joy of discussing family affairs and what we have each of us been seeing and doing, is apt to banish talk of more serious things, even if our relationship did not make us dubious of approaching too near to them. Though a generation older, since we are both artists—and here I may pause to congratulate myself, for I expected a butcher, a house-agent, a general as a son, but never another writer—I can, nevertheless, tell you, out of a long, tedious and at the same time enlivening experience, how to save yourself trouble in pursuit of your goal. Because it is vital to both of us that we should realise that the war is only the Great Interruption, and that your career *must* continue.

It would be idle to pretend that your profession now offers you much prospect of an immediate success. The centre of the Arts has shifted from Paris and London to New York, perhaps for a few years, perhaps for a generation, perhaps for centuries, and we find ourselves in consequence stranded upon an inimical shore, the members of a despised and maltreated sept. Sometimes I blame myself, indeed, for your sake that I did not go to America many years ago, as my friend Aldous did, and make your home there, but I am glad, too, that we stayed at home, because both you and I come from a stock not easily uprooted. In America we should not have felt at our ease, should have

remained visitors. Yet our position here is not easy, for not only are we both artists, but we come of the privileged—formerly privileged—classes, and therefore are shot at by both sides; since the kind of people amongst whom I was born and brought up are still uneducated in æsthetics, only respect pro-consuls and big-game hunters, and, worse still, have been infected with middle-class conventionality and worship of money, while the great majority, the voters, are unlettered, can only read the columns of the daily press, and are now every day flattered into thinking themselves the arbiters of all excellence in the arts. As well tell every daisy that it is a rose!

I must cease generalising though, and descend at once to the particular and the personal. . . . Those who do not know you well would say you were bitter, for you can express yourself pointedly. Indeed, you cannot have been more than fifteen or sixteen when, for example, you said to me—perhaps I paraphrase it—that it seemed to you that the embryonic writer possessed two enemies, the schoolmaster and the captain of the games; the writer, two enemies, the critic and the politician. And I know exactly what you mean; the same feeling, the same belief in authority's instinctive aversion from genius, is focused in a story I once told you. . . . Let me recall it. . . . When I was about twenty, I used often to have luncheon with some surviving friends of my grandfather's and grandmother's. They were a picturesque and entertaining couple. The old lady, subtle and beautiful, expressed herself with an affectation that was a work of art, the old gentleman—he was ninety—looked imposing, with features carved out of rock—the last man, incidentally, to have his winged, starched collars and striped shirts made in one piece. A staunch upholder of the belief that everything was for the best and could not, indeed, have been bettered, providence had paid him a regular thirty thousand pounds annually for more than seventy years to maintain his faith. One day he said to me, 'As you know, I have no patience with fellows who find fault with the world as it is. If they don't get on, *they're* to blame, entirely. . . . I remember when I was at Eton—it's nearly eighty years ago now—the Captain of the House sent for all us younger boys, and, pointing at a tiny chap with a tangle of red hair—a regular bookworm, always readin'—said "If you're ever near enough to him, kick him, and if he's

too far away, throw a book at him." . . . Now that's the proper way to treat such people. . . A reflective, reminiscent look came into his eye, and he added 'I can see him now; nasty little feller . . . Swinburne was his name. A. C. Swinburne. . . I often wonder what happened to him.'

That, I admit, is one kind of critical attitude—but there is another. The position which I occupy as a writer is entirely due to critics whom, naturally, I think discerning. All the help I have received in my career has been from critics. Yet I know there are many who, like yourself, assert that the critic's job is to kill creative art, just as the politician's is to kill those who produce it. Chekhov would have supported your argument—even Chekhov, gentlest of all creators—for Gorky¹ tells us that one day he remarked 'Critics are like horse-flies which prevent the horse from ploughing. . . The horse works, all its muscles drawn tight like the strings on a double-bass, and a fly settles on his flanks and tickles and buzzes . . . he has to twitch his skin and swish his tail. And what does the fly buzz about? It scarcely knows itself; simply because it is restless and wants to proclaim: "Look, I too am living on the earth. See, I can buzz, too, buzz about anything'. For twenty-five years I have read criticism of my stories, and I don't remember a single remark of any value or one word of valuable advice.' Only once Shabichevsky wrote something which made an impression on me . . . he said I would die in a ditch, drunk.' . . . So much for a certain kind of criticism, which always grows more rabid during a war, when, as I shall try to show you in a moment, a special kind of critic, attached to the politician as a crocodile-bird to a crocodile, comes to the fore.

As for the politician, this is his hour. Important as the clown in the ring, he struts about as though he had contrived the situation intentionally, instead of having merely precipitated it, and by his folly made himself and us its joint victims. No words are too large for his ambition. Just as a clown is clothed in trousers and jacket much too big for him, so does he parade the stage toggled out, as it were, in words and sentiments that drag round his feet and encumber his limbs. Yet, in spite of the recurrent calamitous tumbles in which he involves supporters and enemies alike, it is

¹ Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andrees, by Maxim Gorky. Authorised translation from the Russian by Katherine Mansfield, S. S. Koteliensky and Leonard Woolf. Hogarth Press, 1934.

impossible not to feel sorry for him when you compare his lot with that of the artist. Every minute of the day pricks a balloon he has blown, and it collapses with a whimper; whereas the words that artists speak live after them in fire. The politician's words are memorable only when he approaches the rhetoric of the poet; yet a word or two from Blake, in a casual diagnosis of political ills, is worth all Burke. The couplet

‘The prince’s robes and beggar’s rags
Are toadstools on the miser’s bags’

is, for example, a more inspired and inspiring statement of the Socialist outlook than volumes of Marx, while the lines

‘The strongest poison ever known
Came from Cæsar’s laurel crown’

foretell the rise of the Fascist empires with a singular and apocalyptic precision. For one casual remark of Swift’s we would give all Bolingbroke; one broken fragment from a poem by a great master tilts the scale against even the finest patriotic peroration. A country is worth dying for, as it is worth living for, because of the flowers its soil produces. Shakespeare out-distances Waterloo as an English triumph . . . Yet a link may exist between the two: it is possible that had we always been a nation that preferred cross-word puzzles to poetry and the cult of the body to that of the mind, we should not have reaped either of these victories. Similarly, it was the writers and painters of republican France, and not her generals and statesmen, who, after 1870, by their splendour dragged the reputation of their country up from being that of a second-rate power to the leadership of Europe. Perhaps it is only fair compensation that the lies and pretensions of the politicians should die on the air in front of them with a minute explosion, for invariably when, either through their policy itself or through the lack of one, they have landed us in a war, and entangled us for the rest of our lives with death and poverty, even if they do not succeed in killing us outright, it is others who get the blame. Always at a crisis—and I speak from the experience of two great and many lesser such times of suspense—there will be found a body, hitherto concealed, of critics only too eager to rush upon the stage and wave a number of truculent red-herrings in order to divert suspicion from the real authors of the prevailing disaster. In normal times, no one

would heed them, but war spurs them on, and by the vigour and falsity of their unfounded denunciations they are able for a year or two to usurp a brief, almost biblical, authority. In an hour of anxiety, the public will for a moment listen to any and every diagnosis except the right one. And so it is that that denigratory band, Our Betters, who have, perhaps for years, been waiting for a cue that nobody would give them, step boldly out from the ambush of their own mediocrity, thick as sheep's wool.

You asked me in a letter a year ago 'Who is Lord Elton?': an unfair question to put to a writer. I did not reply. Instead, I looked for his name in a book of reference. He wrote a book—as you know, for that is why you asked me—entitled, appropriately enough, *St. George or the Dragon*. The dragon, from a perusal of the book, I take to be the modern artist . . . This is a work of a kind which, in times of hysterical self-accusation—for the various papers and journalists accuse themselves of past blunders with all the enthusiasm of witnesses at a State Trial—readily becomes a prime Christmas favourite with the book-hating public—always a large body. Lord Elton resembles a methodist parson engaged on a witch hunt, the consequences of which he refuses to face. There is a lot of talk of 'the *dègringolade* of the cultured few'. 'Imitations of negro sculpture,' he writes, 'engineering diagrams, drawings which suggested the scribblings of children or lunatics, patterns framed upon chance blots or the natural shapes of stones, all these followed one another with bewildering rapidity'. . . . Is Lord Elton unaware that to find the design latent in natural shapes is one of the chief manifestations of an artist's authenticity? Does he dismiss as artists Leonardo and Michelangelo—it is true, I fear, that they were Italians, and even belonged to 'the cultured few'—who placed so great a dependence upon the aspect of the material, or who derived vision-like inspiration from marks on a wall? Is he ignorant of the extreme importance in Chinese sculpture of such intrinsic design? or does he dismiss the great Chinese traditions as being 'chink'? . . . 'It was usually possible', he pronounces in the next sentence but one, 'to examine an exhibition of the work of these schools, without discovering, if one had not already known, whether they were the products of England or Thibet, of the twentieth or the twelfth century.' At one moment he accuses the intellectuals of being esoteric, at the next he denounces them

because some of the doctrines they propound are not to his liking . . . Well, what is the answer—unspoken, for Lord Elton is a gentleman? . . . The answer is 'Burn their books and paintings, put them in a concentration camp. Throw over the European tradition; renounce Voltaire and Rousseau, and all the writers in succession from them. Do not tell the common man the truth; tell him only what you think is good for him to know, and at the same time flatter him continually with the assurance that he is the supreme arbiter of taste.' The whole book, in short, reeks with prejudice, and is full of a line of argument more usually associated with those who denounced and overthrew the Weimar Republic.

Who, you ask, is this god descended to enlighten us? . . . He is the crocodile-bird of Ramsay MacDonald; his biographer and, I believe, his friend. Surely, he could have spoken a whisper, or hissed a suspicion, into that statesman's ear, in those times when we were going 'up and up and up', and our navy, for example, was going 'down and down and down'! Lord Elton, in *Who's Who*, proclaims that he was expelled from the Labour Party for supporting Ramsay MacDonald: why, in this book, does he denounce so many pacifists, and never MacDonald, chief of them in the last war? We turn over the pages in vain . . . No, it is the poets and the painters and the sculptors who are to blame. They *made* the war, just as the German musicians made the war in 1914; just as the English Catholics were responsible for the Armada, the Spanish Jews for the ills of Spain under the sixteenth-century kings, and American negroes for all crimes of violence in their continent. James Joyce, Huxley, G. D. H. Cole, and others (including Gertrude Stein, who is not even an Englishwoman) were responsible for all the mistakes of the last twenty years, for the inadequacy of the army, the fact that no British generals had been afforded an opportunity of training their men under modern conditions, and the terrible mass unemployment. Not for a moment were the vapid and unimaginative public, drugged regularly by Sandy Macpherson and his peers, the incurious Bourgeoisie, the herds of little men, now promoted, in view of a death to come, to the status of gods, not for a moment were these, though equipped with the vote, to be held responsible for any calamity that ensued. No, it is always the painters and the writers. In fact, in the words of Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe*, ' . . .

'No more winde will I spend on it but this; Saint Denis for Fraunce, Saint Iames for Spaine, Sainte Patrike for Ireland, Saint George for England, and the red Herring for Yarmouth'.

Let us now turn for an instant to another slimmer volume, this time a P.E.N. book, published under the auspices of the P.E.N. Club, *Critical Thoughts in Critical Days*. The awkward play of ideas manifested in this title (strange that so dry a name should have so rancid a flavour) is typical of the donnish jokes and prim, but tittering, flights of fancy in evidence throughout its pages. The author, Mr. F. L. Lucas, a god to his readers and himself, sits in his motor, while the ghost of wretched Macaulay is made to materialise beside him, and is obliged to listen to the unrolling of an insufferable priggishness . . . 'Here', writes Mr. Lucas, ' . . . stands the first of European writers, to me in many ways the finest still.' . . . Thus Homer obtains his school certificate. Nevertheless, our don does, it will be seen, distribute praise as well as blame, but the praise, with the single exception of a greasy compliment to poor Mr. Desmond McCarthy, is reserved for the dead. Only Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Thomas Hardy, and the Shropshire Lad running along to catch them up, are good enough for Mr. Lucas, so superb a fellow is he, with his tic-tac style, resembling that of a curate learning to use the typewriter. He is no tomb-breaker; reverently he scratches and clucks among the graves like a hen which has strayed into a churchyard. He even has a word of commendation for those who, one would imagine, would have most disliked it, Roger Fry and Lytton Strachey. An air of poisonous superiority inhabits his every cliché. 'Reopening Thucydides at odd moments since the War, I have been shocked. He had shrunk. Was the fault mine, or the War's or his? . . .' All three of them, you will notice, Thucydides, the War, and tiny little Mr. Lucas, are on the same scale . . . At any rate, you may object, he does praise a few writers, even if they are dead. Yes, but for what virtues? Because they help *him* in times of trouble. So may the sparrow, twittering upon the broken golden frieze of the Parthenon, give thanks to the makers of Ancient Athens for having built so fine and sunny a perch for him . . . No, Mr. Lucas, that is *not* why they wrote.

'True,' says our paragon elsewhere, 'true that I have read again with wonder passages of Ovid, Seneca and Lucan. One forgets how brilliant they can be. . . . Brains they possessed, as

Mercedith and Shaw and Wilde possessed them. And brains are never common' . . . (Oh, yes, they are common, sometimes, Mr. Lucas). 'The Sagas', he remarks two pages later, 'live for me because they tell of men rammed with life, though dryly scant of words. . . . ' *Rammed*, one hopes, being one of the words of which these Vikings were 'dryly scant'—though a *ram* is a male sheep, and, as such, doubtless dear to Mr. Lucas—or must we blame the printer for snatching still another cliché from Mr. Lucas's grasp? . . . Elsewhere in this odious little volume we are told that 'the years seem to make Coleridge only shabbier and flabbier', while Keats is reproved for not writing 'more things like "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"'! (I can hear the conversation.

'Morning, Keats.'

'Good-morning, Sir . . . How clever of you to recognise me.'

'That was rather a nice thing of yours, Keats, in the Cambridge Non-Parcil, the other day: I hope to see more things like that. . . . Come to me, if you have any trouble with your iambics. Always glad to help you, you know.'

'Thank you, Sir, thank you kindly.'

Now this mimic Hercules, clad in his mouse-skin, this tit-titan, heroicks it, draws his toy wooden sword and charges upon the moderns, calls Mr. Eliot a sewer—in an exquisite pun 'to the sewer, all things are sewer'—trounces D. H. Lawrence for not foreseeing the advent of the Nazis—whereas he was precisely the one writer who as early as 1920 or '21, foretold it¹—and denounces me for having written that 'the multitudinous seas . . . learned to "yap like a Pekinese . . ."' : a thing, of course, I never said. The waves that yap round the Monte Carlo beach are not 'multitudinous seas'. The younger poets are also insulted, but more in general than individually, as with the older writers . . . Yet how—to be frank—such a poet as this Mr. Lucas dares to criticise other poets of any age or sort, I do not know. Listen!

'To think I shall not see you for a week,' he said

'For a week—eternity!

But you'll ring me up before you go to bed

Each night and talk to me?'

¹ In his published correspondence. He says that the heart of Germany has altered, that she is no longer a Western country, and has thrown aside Christian civilization.

That is the first verse of a poem by Mr. Lucas entitled *Ringing False*: the last—and the others between are neither better nor worse—runs

For the spell was broken. A little while,
And we parted, bitterly.
—‘And that is why,’ with a sudden smile,
‘I always wire,’ said she.

What a comfort such broken-toothed lyrics will prove to the sparrows of the future!

You asked me why men like Lord Elton—and I add Mr. Lucas—attack the authors of the last twenty-five years with such peculiar venom. I think it is a quite natural dislike; because the interbellum in England possessed a record in the arts of which any country and any epoch might be proud; but neither Lord Elton nor Mr. Lucas were, to my mind, its most conspicuous ornaments. It gave birth to some of the most vital and inspired writing, painting, music and literature—which fact must remain of the most interest to you and me—that England had produced for centuries. Politics were the whole undermining of us: that is true. But they were not the artist’s dominion. And, if they were, no one in this country would pay attention to what he said (for though Mr. Gladstone was able to make the fortune of Marie Corelli, and Mr. Baldwin the reputation of Mary Webb, yet, by an unfair paradox, no English writer has ever been able to discover and present a politician—unless it was Disraeli, who lavished his successful efforts upon himself). No, the period was damned by its politicians, by the gigantic unemployment they allowed. That, and the not-caring which permitted it to exist, were its most cruel and lamentable features . . . But the danger, and indeed the horror, you will have to face will be of a different order: over-employment. You may see the whole world tied to a machine that will not let go. The price of bread will be a life sentence. Only once or twice a week, perhaps, ‘time off’ will be allowed for machine pleasures, such as the cinema . . . But I would fight—and I know you would—for the right to be idle. We would always oppose the ants in their awful paradise.

The last war—the First War to End Wars—broke out when I was twenty-one; the present war—the Sequel—when you were twenty. Formerly there were only the ordeals of the private and

public school to be endured, concentration camps that were certainly vile enough (there I have seen bullying—and in one instance upon a Jew—which would have taxed the ingenuity of German storm-troopers). But the men of your generation have never for a moment been free; and, unless you conquer in the battle for the hours, there will be no liberty left. The embryonic writer of after-the-war, will have, not only the school-master and the captain of the games for his two enemies, as you say, but the drill-sergeant, the gym-instructor, the leader of the Fire Squad, the Civil Defence Experts, the Inspirer of the Youth Movement, and afterwards, when he grows up, the officials of the labour-exchange and the shop-stewards, as well as the politician and the critic. Such an existence is death to the artist; because, to be able to work at his best, it is necessary for him to have an endless vista of hours and days, within the space of which he can write or paint without any interruption except those that are casual or that he makes for himself. But the modern development of 'healthy citizenship', as it is called, under which every man is obliged to take a hand to repel the attacks from land, sea and air brought upon him by his incompetence as a voter, sterilises all talent. To be able to exist, you will have to give up twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four. Men are no longer wanted, but only numbers; a man today—and if you are not careful, tomorrow as well—is only valuable to the extent that he can supply man-hours—or ant-hours—of labour to the politicians, and at the end a death with which to crown their policy.

As an inducement to this kind of existence and a reward for leading it, the voter, the Little Man, is flattered morning and evening by the Press, and fawned upon by his slave-masters. He is told he is World Champion No. 1, that no one can compare with him. In each country he believes himself to be absolute lord. Moreover, the mental food fed to him renders him unduly excitable in the realm of gross ideas, while, in addition, the people of every nation are profoundly xenophobic. These last facts, unless they can be modified through education (of which development there is no sign) make popular government in the present sense of that term impossible; but they also enable any government, however bad and incompetent, in every country, to achieve an easy and invariable popularity by abuse of foreign

countries, or, in more rational cases, by a governessy upbraiding of them. Hitler, for example, may not have truly represented his people in everything; but he does—and did—truly represent them in his brutish denunciation of foreign nations. But alas, the feeling of innate racial superiority which inhabits the mind of the common man in every country, and is to be examined in its most blatant form in Nazi doctrines, equally must in every country be encouraged, in order to persuade him to consent willingly to the eventual loss of life and fortune. Yet 'Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself' remains the only foundation stone of peaceful relations with foreign countries. A policy based on a collection of Jenkins's Ears, and atrocity-stories generally, cannot endure, however violent it may be, and however attractive it may appear while it lasts.

Thus are men persuaded to yield money, career, freedom, health, life itself to the boundless folly or iniquitous ambition of the demagogues, autocrats and politicians: men who here, during the last twenty years, have scarcely produced a leader. Churchill was the last, but by origin, as by ability, he was out of the ordinary run, half aristocrat, half American, and in no way derived from the middle classes who governed both here and in France, and who, by their lack of intuition and energy, except in the realm of finance, have proved so great a blight upon their countries. . . It is only fair, however, to admit that where, as in Italy and Germany, the middle classes *have* yielded and the lower classes have taken over, the leaders who have arisen, are, if less purely incompetent, far madder, more unbridled, violent with the violence of the turbulent mob from which they spring. Yet they are merely a reflection of those whose energies they sap and whose lives they ruin.

What can *our* politicians say in their own and our defence? They can say that here, as opposed to the enemy countries, all that has been done to render war probable has been done by mistake, and not on purpose—but to an unprejudiced mind, does not this make their responsibility worse? . . . The strangulation of your life, the chief calamity that involves every man and woman, befalls you because war is total. But remember, it is only total because the politicians have allowed it to be so. The governments of the last two decades have lied and deceived—no doubt, often not of intention—so consistently, they have been

so free of unfulfilled and specious promises, that the point has now been reached where the people feel they can only trust a statesman who comes to them with the terrible words 'I can promise you nothing but blood and tears and sweat': the enunciation of a policy, which though in a way noble, could hardly be surpassed in menace by the threats of foreign autocrats, bellowing across the water what they will do to us when they get us . . . (So might the Jews have welcomed the words of King Rehoboam, who promised them scorpions for whips) . . . And, indeed, whereas in former ages of barbarism the whole populations of whole countries were uprooted and enslaved *after* a war by a victorious foe, now every government uproots and enslaves its own people *during* a war. Only thus can a country survive in total war. This is total war.

If, in States vowed to death and to fights without a finish, the lot of every man is, of course, hard, that of the artist is especially abominable. In England, unless some special status is allowed him, as elsewhere, it will mean, in fact, that he becomes a helot. Had Mozart been a modern Englishman—or, for that, a modern Austrian—he would have spent the last three years training to fight, fighting, or engaged in forced labour; and since he died at thirty-six, this would have constituted a large slice of his art-life. Conceive the loss to the world had conscription been in force! Imagine, too, how greatly a modern government would relish being able to waste several years of Shelley's brief span by making him a fireman, or enjoy sending Keats, with his weak lungs, upon a gas course . . . Yet our governors are humane; they prefer muzzling an artist to his downright destruction. 'Give the creature a safe job; make him write what *we* like.' . . . Can you imagine Shelley or Blake at a desk in the M.O.I., or Byron fitting in and out of the Studios of the B.B.C. You are, alas, destined to live in an age in which no painter will be supplied with paints without a permit from the director of the National Gallery, no writer with paper save by the grace of the Paper Controller. For, in a democracy, the artist, first smeared with his own honey, is then staked down upon the ant-heap . . . In the end, however, the artist and the thinker win. Even starvation cannot prevail against them: it has been tried before . . . Nevertheless, for your own sake, think the matter out, sum up your position.

It is wise not to underrate the difficulties, the cruel difficulties before you. It will be harder for you than ever it was for your father. The true artist has always had to fight, but it is, and will be, a more ferocious struggle for you, and the artists of your generation, than ever before. The working-man, this time, will be better looked after, he will be flattered by the Press and bribed with Beveridge schemes, because he possesses a plurality of votes. But who will care for you or your fate, who will trouble to defend the cause of the young writer, painter, sculptor, musician? And what inspiration will you be offered, when theatre, ballet, concert-hall lie in ruins, and, owing to the break in training, there will be no great executive artists for several decades? Above all, do not underestimate the amount and intensity of the genuine ill-will that people will feel for you; not the working man so much as the more educated, the fat middle classes and the little men. And here, first, I must make special mention of the civil servant as enemy. Throughout your life your liveliness will provoke his particular attention, and so will suffer the continued passive obstruction that his resistant softness opposes to the will of the artist, towards whom he bears an inborn loathing. He envies the artist's liberty of disposition and path of enjoyment, although officially he rates the gummy persistence of the limpet above all other virtues, above the wind-swift speeding of the greyhound or any species of conscious thought. . . . At the best, you will be ground down between the small but powerful authoritarian minority of art directors, museum racketeers, the chic, giggling modistes who write on art and literature, publishers, journalists and dons (they will all, to do them justice, try to help you, if you will write as they tell you)—and the enormous remainder, who would not mind, who would indeed, be pleased, if they saw you starve. For we English are unique in that, albeit an art-producing nation, we are not an art-loving one. In the past the arts depended on a small number of very rich patrons. The enclave they formed has never been re-established. The very name 'art-lover' stinks. The small army of art-lovers that still exists, trailing round the smashed and empty galleries, belongs to the Victorian Age. When it moves, the rattle of camphor balls sounds like a rain of bullets in the echoing scagliola halls of houses thrown open to members of the art-loving congregations.

Decrepit it may be, but it still retains its power to injure. It only cares for old masters, and you will be surprised at the vigour and satisfaction with which it will always trample on the new.

The privileges you hold today, then, as an artist, are those of Ishmael, the hand of every man is against you. Remember, therefore, that outcasts must never be afraid, and that to a writer, courage should, before physical courage, signify moral courage—during wars a quality often at a discount, whatever the packs of journalists may bleat to the contrary. As an artist, the only crime you can commit is to fail to support and uphold your peers, to agree in your heart with the herd, and, above all, to be *afraid* of ideas, *afraid* of beauty. You must never take heed for the morrow, never be afraid of the morning, for you have no more to lose than you brought with you.

On the contrary, join in, I say. Accept the situation and rejoice. We live in an age of world-wide hysteria—and not without reason—an age when not to believe as many atrocity-stories as your neighbour believes puts you not only in danger of hell fire, but, if he has his way, exposes you to the rigours of persecution. You would rank as a heretic, as one who refuses to place credence in the Thirty-Nine Articles, or who, by declining to take part in a witch hunt, numbers himself openly among the witches. You were even denounced the other day—because I heard it—for saying that you did not believe that in a stadium in Poland Jewish babies had been seized from their mothers' arms and used as footballs by storm-troopers. It was most injudicious of you. Do you want a martyr's crown of that kind? It can always be obtained. . . No, adopt the homœopathic system, but prescribe large doses. Be inventive. Use your creative gift. Pretend to believe and then go one better. Enjoy yourself. Sicken them with the blatant nonsense you pour out. Tell them you know their stories are true, and repeat everything that you have ever heard in the same line, however improbable. Pile it on, until *they* begin to argue against *you*. Insist on believing everything with a firmer belief than they do; go a hundred times better. Whenever the crowd mentions Italians, shout 'wops!', 'dagos!', 'ice-creamers!' It may prove difficult for you, since you lived in Italy as a child, but you must persist. Tell them that Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo, Titian and Veronese,

were all really Englishmen with American mothers; and declare that Noel Coward is worth all Dante. (Point out that Dante never wrote the music for his 'lyrics'.)

When you have satiated and disgusted them with your atrocity stories, agree with them that *perhaps* they *are* right not to believe everything they are told. And add, quickly, before leaving them, that perhaps the ability *not* to be taken in by superstitions, not to bow the knee to Mumbo-Jumbo, whether in West Africa or South Kensington, whether outside a kraal or a town hall, decorated with flags, is, after all, the test of a civilised man. But, notwithstanding, at the end of all this, now that a reaction has set in, and before you go, you must let them know this much of the truth; that you abhor brutality, from wherever it comes, and whether shown to Jew or Christian, that you do not attempt to minimise the sufferings of the persecuted, but that by believing stories palpably untrue, you do the genuine victims a disservice. Tell them that you know, and have long known, the Germans to be a brutal race; that you had been brought up to believe it, even at the time the crowd were praising them, saying they preferred them to the French, and that 'they are just like us'. (What a curious, recurrent, dangerous hallucination is that!) Otherwise, unless you emphasise this point, you will leave them in the right to the point that their hysteria may at least have arisen from a hatred of oppression. Remember, for your own comfort, that you only exaggerate for the sake of moderation; because you must ever pursue the golden mean, the most difficult of all ideals for the artist, with the clashes inherent in his temperament and his need for expression, to follow.

You asked me, when I last saw you, what were my politics, and I find it a question difficult, even now, to answer. I belong to the balance of the body politic, and have at one moment felt, and acted, in one mood, at another, in another. I believe in trying to achieve the fullest liberty for the individual within the bounds of human and political conscience. With the late D. H. Lawrence, it is my opinion that, where finance and economics are concerned, it is man's chief misfortune that those who are at present most active and eager in these fields, *i.e.* in the pursuit of money or in planning to take it away—and whose ideas are therefore the most likely to prevail, unless we can marshal the disinterested—are the most unpleasant, the most material-minded

of all men, either the most greedy, the most anxious to exploit their fellows, or the most dry, kill-joy doctrinaires. In any case, money is only something we have ourselves created for our own use; it is not a god or a religion; that is to say, money is made to be spent. But so long as the money-world is ruled by the beaked and bloated tribes of the great capitalists, whose fortunes must be considered as a kind of elephantiasis, or threatened by the dour, sour looks of our old enemies, the Puritans, what can you expect?

I would not like to see—though no doubt I shall—hereditary wealth abolished. Today men seem afraid to defend it. American ideas of ant-labour prevail. But, in all truth, the only kind of wealth worth having is the kind you do not earn: it is unassociated with the mean and slavish virtue of thrift. You have time in which to learn how to spend your money, and time in which to spend it. Obversely, I would like to see the possession and privileges of inherited wealth extended universally. To abolish hereditary possessions today, instead of insisting on them for everyone, would be equivalent to the action of the Elizabethans, had they decreed the abolition of glass in all windows, because it was only to be found at that time in the houses of the rich, and had by banning it thereby prevented its use from becoming general. Samuel Butler maintained, in the *Way of all Flesh* and in his Notebooks, that one day it would be as anomalous to be born without an annual income attached to you of three or four hundred, to come to you when you had reached the age of twenty-five or so years, as it is today to be born with arms or legs. Evolution should provide each of us with a fortune, as with a face. I think he was right.

I was told lately, by an American who had been in Paris when the Germans entered the capital, that German officers could be seen sitting in the fashionable tea-shops, gnawing huge lumps of butter, or sometimes with twenty to thirty cakes piled on the plate, in front of them: this was, of course, the ugly result of underfeeding. A gross fortune is, similarly, the result—and as indecent a result—of poverty, the most degrading of human afflictions. But the stupidity of successive governments in Britain has at least accomplished this much, that we can say that any man who today sets out to make a great fortune, must be either a great fool or a great philanthropist, and—if he succeeds—a great

knave; for he pays 19s. 6d. in the pound as income tax and at least two-thirds of his possessions must go to the State when he dies. For though governments in the past feared to overtax the people they ruled, or pretended to represent, they have now made what must be to them a most joyful discovery; that, so long as the situation which necessitates it arises from sheer muddle, lack of foresight and incompetence, and not of intention, they can squander the national income up to any limit—and this is of benefit to them—at least indirectly—by increasing their importance. If, that is to say, they take all your money, not because they believe in doing so, not because they are advocates of Socialism, but because, on the contrary, having continually opposed it, they yet have floundered, of their own accord, into a position so tragic and untenable that it becomes their sole chance of rescue, and nothing else remains to be done except to cling to an expedient in which they have no faith, then, to reproach them becomes unpatriotic. But you and I would surely, even though we are not Socialists, prefer to live in a State that was Socialist by principle rather than by virtue of the amazing ineptitude of its politicians.

Yet it is not, perhaps, for a writer to complain. If an artist, it is scarcely probable that he will make a great fortune in a capitalist State, though it is true that he occupies, at any rate financially, a special place in it. For one thing, the proceeds of a book, which may have taken him five years to write, are liable to income tax and super-tax—though a great portion of the money should surely be regarded as capital; for another, it has long been recognised that a writer's particular form of property, the copyright of the books he has created, is on a different footing to all other property, is not inalienable, and should, in fact, be snatched from his family or heirs as soon as this can be accomplished without an appearance of indecent haste. On the other hand, such an attitude is by no means confined to the old-fashioned democracies. The more modern and democratic is the State concerned, the less it allows to authors, at any rate foreign authors. Thus, in the United States of America, piracy in foreign books is no crime; while in Soviet Russia it is a duty. . .

So much for the writer's financial status. What the artist should do, then, for his own sake, I think, is not to advocate that money be taken away from its present owners, but to support a policy which will undermine its attraction for the material-

minded by diminishing the value they can set upon it. Rationing, for example, already accomplishes this. It soon becomes plain that there is little object in making too much money, if there is little or nothing to buy with it. Confine the rich to the pastures of a restricted Fortnum and Mason's. Advocate heavy, permanent taxes on jewellery and old masters and decorative objects, and then you will be able to say to the rich, in the continual effort you must make to educate those of them who need it, 'Look! modern pictures and books remain; their value *may* increase, while that of investments is bound to sink.' Plug that over, every time.

Money, though, is not so important to you as liberty: I recur to that. You must carry out a continual campaign against civil-servants, dons, masters-of-hounds, schoolmasters, professional football-players, and all the friends to national sclerosis everywhere. Again, use your sense of fantasy and of fun. Hit them where they least expect it. If, for example, it should prove—which I do not believe—that the character of the English people has changed, should it transpire that the young are to be enslaved for ever, and the artists subjected to continual domination by pin-heads, then charge the foe. If you find that it has been planned for the intelligent, the intellectual, above all, the creative, and those who live for things of the spirit to spend a large portion of their lives after the war in undergoing, one after another, courses in gas and bomb-throwing, then loudly, and on every occasion, you must demand in the name of Sacred English Fair Play, that the philistines who hate art and literature and love to handle and throw bombs and to fire guns and, generally, to be as noisy and destructive as possible, and to live with a continual B.B.C. programme from opening to close, should, as compensation, be obliged to suffer six-weeks-long compulsory courses in Dutch Painting or Persian textiles, and to pass endurance-tests in the Art Element in Chinese Calligraphy and in English Romantic Poetry. Torn from their peacetime occupations of golf, darts and reading the papers, they must be made, during these courses, to live under, for them, the most uncomfortable circumstances possible; they must be forced to sleep on planks, eighty in a hut (unless they show a liking for dormitory life, when they should be placed in the solitary confinement of a comfortable bedroom). No radio should be allowed in any hut or mess. At meal times, they must listen in silence to Beethoven quartets, and after dinner attend

orchestral concerts of Mahler and Stravinsky. The examinations in Byzantine jewellery and Turkish Tiles should be conducted to the appropriate music of the countries concerned. During the Netherlands School of Painting Course, they should be taken by train, starting from London at midnight, to that flat part of East Anglia which somewhat resembles Holland in configuration, and there be made to lie for hours in a damp ditch, so as to observe the sunrise over the river from the correct angle. During the daytime they should be made to adopt the proper physical attitudes of Teniers boors, one foot in the air, an arm extended, and later learn to dance in the same jolly and abandoned style. They should be forced to carry with them always a Field Art Notebook, in which to make entries . . . The unsuccessful candidates for promotion, the recalcitrant and stubborn, could be ordered to take further courses in French Symbolist Poetry, as well as English Romantic, and be examined minutely on the works of Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud. Those who showed any symptom of being refractory could, even, be commanded to attend a lecture on the latest art movement by Group-Dupe Herbert Read. But you should be humane as well as stern, and first aid should be ready on all occasions for the mind as well as the body.

I implore you to take what I say seriously, even when I put it in a form to amuse you. You are a cavalier by type, and not a roundhead, and you will need all the fun you can make for yourself and others, as well as all the fighting-spirit you can muster, if you are, as I hope, to carry on a long one-man campaign against stupidity and priggishness wherever you see it. Never allow yourself to be discouraged, however hopeless at any one moment the struggle may appear. . . I must end now, for my letter is long, and at present you have not much time for reading; but there still remain several subjects on which I must talk to you in my next letter.

Your affectionate father.

ANDRÉ MASSON

PAINTING IS A WAGER

THIS fragment only offers a rough view of the three recent tendencies of painters' activity. These in their liberating outbursts have this thesis in common: the picture is an objectification of what is imagined by the painter; it is no longer an imitation of objects existing in reality.

Various disasters seem to be overtaking the art of this epoch. On consideration, they resume themselves into one single condition which one is tempted to call 'lost unity'. This typifies the disruption of this moment of history. Contrary to Greek civilization, which radiated an æsthetic and philosophical will, the structure of contemporary civilization is based on science, which is dispersion itself. This does not aim at denying the importance of scientific research but only at recognizing that its object is not that of assessing values; and the absence of a sovereign philosophy disciplining the varied achievements of knowledge must be deplored. Further, deprived of the architectural frame, of the given surface (let us notice that the last manifestation of architecture worthy of the name was the baroque, final expression of the fusion of the quantitative and the sensitive) thrown up into a mental desert, solitary and yet working for others, the authentic artist must find for himself the movement towards a myth. In addition, the passionate search for the ineffable creates a desperate breach between the content and the container, the means being often inferior to the highest aspirations.

The aspect of modern art is threefold: Cubist, surrealist and abstract. This last denomination represents, on the psychological level, the unconscious flight before the contradictions offered us by a tortured epoch, and, on the æsthetic level, it resolves these contradictions by the absurd; proclaiming the advent of a pure image, the abandon of all emotive content, and of all allusion to the real; form for form's sake. I find this theory of art a heresy.

In order to justify this criticism we must return to the past: Plato said that harmony was knowledge itself. Cornelius Agrippa thought that all the forces of nature could be reduced to numbers,

weights and measures, movement and light, and in the thirteenth century Robert Grossetête, one of the Oxford scholars, taught in his essay on 'The Rainbow' that even a human act can be assessed in lines, points, angles and figures. We agree that they are right, since, in addition, we are not ignorant of what Western thought essentially owes to Pythagoras. By necessity numbers, geometry, 'divine proportion' should be an integral part of plastic representation. It might be suggested that this internal structure is the foundation of all art, and further that this movement can be quite instinctive and need not leave the domain of intuition. It is, therefore, necessary for proportion and geometry to be integrated into visible representation, but, for that reason, it is none the less deplorable that certain artists, geometricians, *manqués*, mistake the compass for the goal, the means for the end, and satisfy themselves with this first step. This reminds one of the story of the child who, throwing a stone into the water, admires the rings which appear and regards them as a work in which he finds the intuition of what is his own. By his act the child instinctively demonstrates the impulse which is at the root of all expression, the transformation of the exterior world by putting one's imprint upon it. But the pilgrims of abstraction only shut themselves up in the arid regions where indifference reigns.

I will now consider the importance of Cubism. In point of fact one cannot admire too much the constructive insistence which led the Cubists to the invention of a purely pictorial expression. The originality of this school consists of its achievement, without any known precedent, of a representation of depth. Going beyond the conventional limits of the third dimension in use since the Renaissance, it imposes a new dimension which is not exactly that of non-Euclidean geometry but which is a certain way of representing duration of time: the object is shown with all its sides as if it were flattened on to a plane surface; it is shown motionless to the spectator just as if he were changing position. This astonishing achievement also led the Cubists to a new knowledge of intervals, without which plastic representation leaves the royal road of art to become nothing more than an amusement at the mercy of the changes of fashion. These intervals are loaded with as much energy as the shapes which decide them. The ignorance of this essential law of great painting puts in his place the superficial painter, who is content with haphazardly

placing more or less exciting objects in a happy-go-lucky way in front of a background. In this case it is no longer anything to do with space, it is only a question of expanse such as is revealed by the photographic camera and by academic painting. In Cubist painting it is the aims of the painter, or rather the dynamism of these aims, which create space and make the work homogeneous. This science of intervals also leads to an understanding of the greatness of Seurat and of Matisse.

However, the few great painters who illustrated Cubism could not by their own impulse go beyond the following duality.

(a) Abandonment to the irrational, inasmuch as the means of expression were conceived.

(b) The most rational solution as soon as a subject has been decided upon.

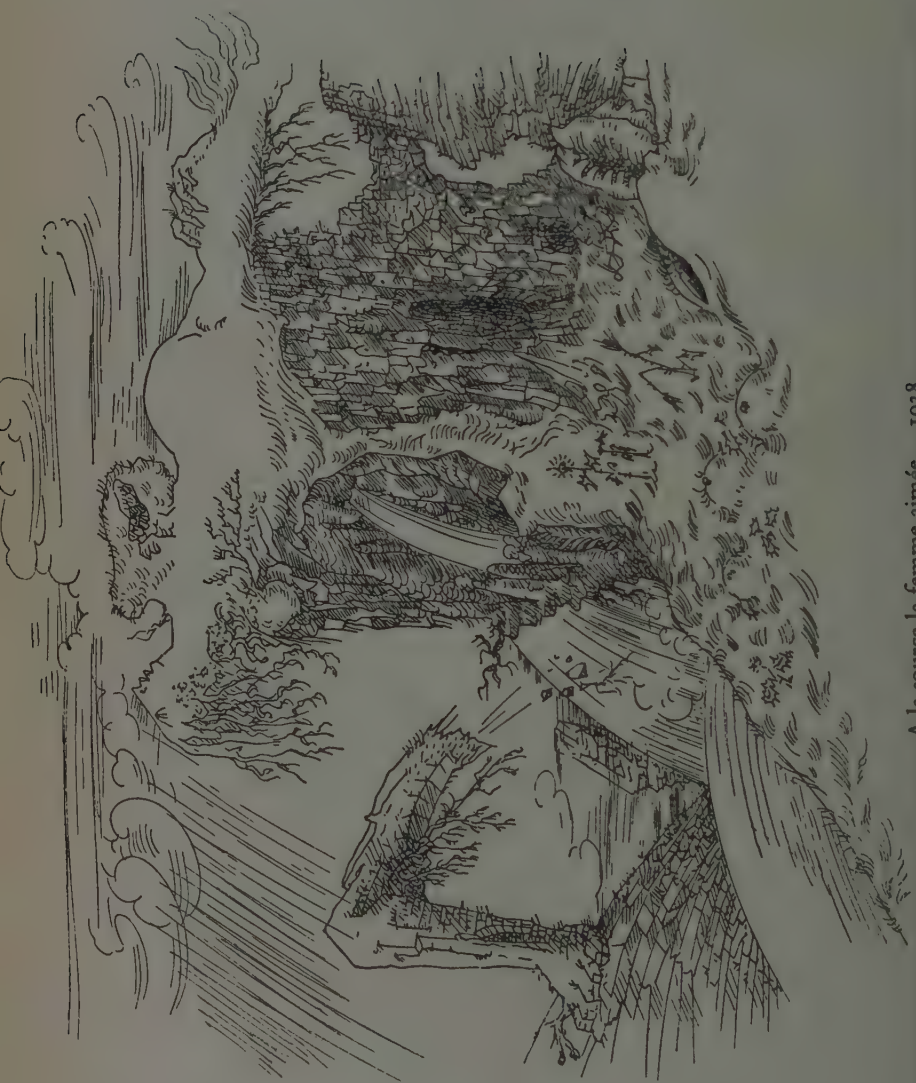
Limiting themselves to painting familiar household objects (a legacy amongst others from Cézanne) and of faces frozen in their construction, setting up a vision of the universe in opposition to the representation of deep instincts, forbidding themselves the expression of those things which are at the root of all human beings, hunger, love and violence, they left the door open for a new revolution. Like a cosmic ray the surrealist illumination came to change the nature of this good will with regard to the irrational.

For us, young surrealists of 1924, the great prostitute was reason. We judged that Cartesians, Voltaireans, and other officials of the intelligence had only made use of it for the preservation of values which were both established and dead, whilst, at the same time, affecting a façade of dissension. And the supreme accusation was that it has given reason the mercenary job of making fun of love and poetry. This denunciation was made by one group with intense energy. At that time there was a great temptation to try to operate magically on things, and then on ourselves. The impulse was so great that we could not resist it and so, from the end of the winter of 1924, there was a frenzied abandon to automatism. This form of expression has survived until today. Objectively I will add that to this immersion in the night—(into what the German romantics call the night side of things) and to the always desirable appeal of the marvellous was added the game, the serious game. I can see us again. None of us, stunned as we were by our



HÉRACLITE.

Drawings by ANDRÉ MASSON. 1938.



A la source la femme aimée. 1938.

magic, whether vain or effective, asked himself if 'the contrary of a fault is not another fault'—thus, a century before, Friedrich Schlegel had asked himself this question which clearly illuminates with a shaft the romantic irony. Certainly, ever since the first surrealist conquests, the question should have been put whether the abandon to the imagination was ever likely to be surpassed. Some of us have since replied in the affirmative. The danger of automatism is, without any doubt, only the association of inessential connections whose content, Hegel said, does not surpass that which is contained in the images. However, it is correct to add that if, in philosophical research, the capital law is to mistrust the association of ideas, the same law does not hold good for artistic creation which is, in essence, sensitive intuition. The process of images, the wonder or the agony of meeting, open a way rich in plastic metaphor: *a fire of snow*. From this springs its attraction and its fragility, and the tendency to become too easily satisfied, and too far removed, from the laws of proportion and from any tactile understanding of the world.

Whatever it may have been, a few of us were in fear of 'the other fault': of making of the appeal to the unconscious something as limited as the discredited rationalism, but all to no good. Towards 1930, five years after the foundation of surrealism, a formidable disaster appeared in its midst: the demagoguery of the irrational. For a time this was to lead pictorial surrealism to the trite and to universal approbation. The conquest of the irrational for the irrational is a poor conquest, and the imagination is indeed sad which only associates those elements worn out by dismal reason, such as materials tarnished by lazy habit, by memory (I will refer again to this) picked up here and there, from the works of 'amusing natural philosophy', from the antique shops and from our grandfathers' magazines.

Thus, in its turn, surrealism shut itself into a duality incomparably more dangerous than cubism;

(a) by liberating the psychic menagerie, or, at any rate, making a pretence of this liberation in order to use it as a theme;

(b) by expressing itself by the methods left over by the academics of the preceding century. The rediscovery of the old horizon, that of Meissonier, set a limit to this reactionary perversion. The retrogression proceeded with perfect insolence. The admirable

achievements of Seurat, Matisse and the cubists, were considered empty and of no significance. Their inspiring conception of space, their discovery of essentially pictorial means were taken for an obstructive inheritance to be left behind.

Should one conform to this new academism? Of course not. It was obviously necessary to assess a strict estimate of the conditions pertaining to the imaginative work. And first of all, to establish the principle that it is vital for the imaginative artist, who is only able to compose his work with elements which are already existing within reality, to keep his eyes open on to the exterior world and not to see things in their perceived generality, but in their revealed individuality. There is a whole world in a drop of water trembling on the edge of a leaf, but it is only there when the artist and the poet have the gift of seeing it in its immediacy. However, to avoid making any mistakes, this revelation or inspired knowledge, and this contact with nature are only profound in so far as they have been prepared by the thought and by the intense consideration of the artist. This is the only way in which sensitive revelation can enrich knowledge. The tendency to allow oneself to be swamped by things, the ego being no more than the vase which they fill, really only represents a very low degree of knowledge. In the same way a casual appeal to subterranean powers, the superficial identification with the cosmos, false 'primitivism' are only aspects of an easy pantheism.

★ ★ ★ ★

Let us repeat the major conditions which the contemporary work of the imagination must fulfil in order to last. We have seen that automatism (the investigation of the powers of the unconscious), dreams, and the association of images only provide the materials. In the same way Nature and the elements provide the subjects. The real power of an imaginative work will derive from the three following conditions:

- (1) the intensity of the preliminary thought;
- (2) the freshness of the vision on to the exterior world;
- (3) the necessity of knowing the pictorial means most suitable for the art of this time. It is also important not to forget that the saying of Delacroix '*une œuvre figurative doit être surtout une fête pour les yeux*' remains true. This certainly does not mean

that instinct must give way to reflection and inspiration to intelligence. The fusion of the different elements brought into play by the painter-poet will take place with the flashing rapidity of light. The unconscious and the conscious, intuition and understanding must operate their transmutation on the subconscious mind in radiant unity.

(Reprinted by permission of Cahiers du Sud. 1942.)

PHILIP TOYNBEE

INTERMENT OF A LITERARY MAN

THE whole conduct of the interment was to be as secular as possible. Lucy Davenport had insisted that even the word 'funeral' should be avoided, for the mystical and ceremonious sound of it. From her veranda chair she had appealed to Mark Wade, who was standing gloomily beside her, staring down the green slope of the garden, over the river, up to the horizon of downs and cloud. He had told her that a service could be avoided altogether, but that this precluded the use of consecrated ground.

'Then we'll bury him on the Portsmouth by-pass,' Lucy Davenport's voice vibrated with the nervous shuddering which always assailed her when she was excited. 'You know Charles would have preferred a sewer to a churchyard.'

'He left no instructions in his will,' Wade spoke drily, without looking at her. 'I don't think Charles cared one way or the other. As for the by-pass, there would be legal difficulties to that. Of course, if you won't have a service, you can bury him in a municipal cemetery.'

'Ah no, Mark. That would be worst of all.'

So he turned to her at last, the irritation on his face deliberately preserved there.

'You know what I feel, Lucy. A freak funeral would embarrass

everyone, and the only point of the celebration is to allow the living to contemplate the dead with as little distraction as possible.'

'Isn't mumbo-jumbo a distraction?'

'It's accepted : it doesn't distract.'

'Mark, it would be a mockery.' She sat up and threw off the rug which had covered her legs, revealing a thin, old woman's body, a blue cotton dress, woollen stockings, broad-toed garden-
ing shoes.

Wade knew that he must compromise, that he couldn't even threaten to wash his hands of it. He respected death and he was determined that his old friend should be treated properly.

'I know a parson,' he said, 'who has virtually lost his faith. He would be willing . . . I can vouch for his being willing to conduct the sort of service which wouldn't offend you.'

Lucy's vague stupid eyes were fixed on him. 'You're sure, Mark? No God or heaven?'

'I doubt if he believes in either.'

But though this was at last conceded, it proved to be only the first of Wade's trials. Next he visited the Stonebourne undertaker, and arranged with him every detail of price and procedure. Not that Charles Davenport had left his wife in difficult circumstances; but Wade had worked his way from poverty, and he resented the monstrous exploitation of death which undertakers too often practise.

After this he called at the vicarage. He was shown into a sunny drawing-room by a parlour-maid whose starch crackled as she walked.

The vicar was a huge old man with a red face and a red scalp. He stood a foot from Wade and stared at him.

'I'm a friend of Charles Davenport's. I've come about the funeral.' He felt, at these words, as intrusive as a commercial traveller.

'I mean that I've come to ask your advice about it. My name's Wade.'

'Yes, yes. I know your name. I've read some of your things with great interest, Mr. Wade.'

'That's most kind,' said Wade.

'I've read Davenport's things, too.'

These 'things' oppressed Wade—as though they were too indecent to be more closely described. He began to explain

why he had come, his manner persuasive and gently condescending. He was not accustomed to clergymen, and he humoured him as he would have humoured an intelligent lunatic. When he had done, the vicar motioned him to a chair, and sat down himself on the far side of the hearth.

'I confess, Mr. Wade, that this is an unusual request. I am accustomed to conduct the funerals of this parish myself.'

'Of course, Mr. Townsend, It's most natural that you should feel that. But Canon Lister was a very old friend of Charles Davenport, and Davenport expressed a strong wish to be buried by him.'

He lied blandly, hardly aware that he was lying, so different were his beliefs from the vicar's, so different the meaning of the words they used. The vicar stroked his jaw.

'If I was assured that no other reason prompted the request, I would readily grant it. But neither Mr. nor Mrs. Davenport, during their twenty years' residence in the parish, has once attended divine service in Saint Luke's. I need hardly add that my acquaintance with Mr. Davenport's literary works has given me some insight into his religious views.'

'Really, Mr. Townsend . . .' Wade spoke pompously now, Really, Mr. Townsend, I have never understood that it was customary to investigate a man's religious views before permitting his burial in consecrated ground.'

He was amused, and yet irritated too. It had taken two hours to persuade Lucy that Christian burial was preferable to a gesture of old-fashioned atheism; and now he was a suppliant for the six feet of consecrated ground which she despised.

'Naturally not.' The vicar lit a pipe and crossed his long black legs. 'But I am the custodian of St. Luke's Churchyard, and I'm sure you must understand my responsibilities. Am I to allow Christian burial to become meaningless, a mere empty formula preceding the sanitary disposal of a body?'

'Indeed I do understand.' Wade paused, as though in perplexity. 'But the alternative is unpleasant to contemplate. Secular funerals lack the solemnity and beauty of a church service. I wouldn't wish one for my friend. Surely, too, there is hope for the redemption of unbelievers even after death.'

'A question, Mr. Wade, which has exercised and divided theologians for many centuries.'

It shocked Wade to realize how closely the vicar's manner resembled his own. 'Then I am to take it that we must look elsewhere'.

He stood up and stared angrily down at the comfortable expanse of the vicar.

'No, Mr. Wade, that's too heavy a responsibility. I see that I must grant your request.'

Wade thanked him quickly, and quickly left.

After this his interview with Lister was as easy as it was depressing. At Oxford Lister had been a sallow fanatic, hovering on the brink of Rome, a Puseyite troubled by Newman, years after both were dead. Now he was a tormented, elderly invalid in the throes of spiritual agonies which were mustier still—musty now with the odour of Clough and Matthew Arnold.

'Ah, Wade . . .' he looked like a bent white mole as he stood at his study door. 'I got your letter. Come in, won't you, and take a chair.'

The room was very different in every detail from the vicar's. Old books were scattered on the floor, and typescripts on table and chairs. The narrow city street blocked the sun from the window.

'Rather a pigstye, I'm afraid. I've been working like a beaver, you know, trying to get the book finished.'

Wade felt a sudden strong disgust for his mission. He hated his overbearing role, the successful modern man browbeating this poor ghost of a forgotten battle. So he spoke humbly.

'Lister, I have a feeling that I shouldn't have come to you.'

'It's a difficult question.' Lister's hand trembled as he held out a battered carton of miniature cigars. 'Do smoke, won't you: they're not so bad as they look.' Wade accepted one, and held it to the trembling flame. 'I gather Davenport was a thorough-going disbeliever.'

'That's so. In some senses he was a violent enemy to religion.'

'So you chose me to bury him.' The sick head was bowed, but Wade could see a crease of perplexity on the forehead. He began to feel exasperated by Lister's uncertainty.

'The last time we met I gathered that you had arrived at a more or less Unitarian position, a sort of deism.'

'Ah, the divinity of Christ. I'm dealing with that now.' Lister

looked eagerly round at the typescripts on the table. 'What I feel, Wade, is that the divinity of Christ is simply a high and splendid token of the divinity of man.'

'Well, that's probably another way of saying what many of us believe—that man's desires and aspirations aren't all on a level.'

'But there's a true dichotomy.' Lister pushed himself out of his chair, and stood with his back to the fireplace. 'Indeed I see no rising scale of human aspiration, but a sharp distinction between the divine and the human.'

'I feel sure,' said Wade, 'that your beliefs need not prevent you from performing Davenport's funeral service.'

'I wouldn't wish to be hypocritical, Wade, not in either direction. I owe you many debts of gratitude: I don't know what to say.'

'My dear Lister, I don't want you to consider this the fulfilment of your quite imaginary debts. You must allow your conscience to decide.'

And yet Wade knew that gratitude would weigh heavily on the tortuous scales of Lister's conscience.

'You know that I've given up holding services. The Bishop has allowed me to retire to my researches.'

'Yes, I knew that.'

'The only service I could hold would perhaps shock by its bleakness. Even the immortality of the soul is by no means a clear issue to me.'

'Nor to any of us, I assure you. What the widow would wish is a brief, non-doctrinal affair—dignified but unelaborate. I felt sure that you would find a successful solution.'

Now Wade's personality had escaped the checks he had put on it; he was frankly overpowering, and Lister seemed to shrink from the blast of this determination.

'Very well, Wade; I'll hold the service. I think I understand what's required.'

'I'm most grateful.' Wade stood up and shook Lister's feeble hand. He stopped at the door and said: 'One small point. Mrs. Davenport wishes me to give a short address after the service. I imagine you won't mind.'

'No, indeed. I never knew him myself. I should be totally unsuited to the task. Besides it's quite a common practice nowadays to invite lay preachers. Oh, no objection at all.'

Wade strongly felt the futility of his achievement. His interview with Lister made him suspect how grotesque the compromise could be, perhaps even more grotesque than Lucy's burial by the roadside. Also he was still oppressed by the after-taste of his bullying. 'Why, why,' said Wade, 'should I take such disreputable pains?' It was certainly not for Lucy; nor, he now saw, was it for Charles, since Charles was dead and Wade believed that he owed no obligations to the dead. He thought that his only motive could be respect for death itself, for he was himself a death-fearing man.

With her hysteria Lucy Davenport combined a helpless incompetence which seemed to grow hourly during the days before the funeral. She seldom moved from her wicker chair in the veranda, and sitting there she moaned at Wade all through that afternoon.

'I don't want Charles's mother, Mark. She hated both of us and it would be sheer hypocrisy for her to come.'

'But, my dear, we're not issuing invitations to the funeral. Anyone can come who's prepared for a forty minute journey from London. We can't discriminate.'

'She'll come, if only to make trouble.'

'Yes, I dare say she will come; we must put up with it.'

Lucy turned her sad face back to the garden, and a strand of grey hair fell across her cheek. 'Another thing, Mark. I'm not happy about your clergyman. I'm sure he'll say something impossible. Didn't you tell me he believes in God?'

'Lucy, aren't you being too much of a purist? The service will be very short and I'm quite sure Lister won't embarrass you.'

'How Charles would have loathed it all!'

'I doubt it. He'd have been amused. We'd all be amused by our own funerals.'

She pulled at the loose strand of hair, and spoke now with a dull intensity. 'Charles's works will live, Mark. I know they will.'

'He had great ability,' said Wade.

'Then his works will live.'

Wade looked down at her. 'My dear, that's a most impossible prophecy to make. To my mind Charles was quite the best biographer of his time, but whether he'll be read in a hundred years nobody can tell. We tend, you know, to overestimate our contemporaries.'

'But what do you think?'

'Oh, yes,' he said stiffly, 'I think Charles's works will live.'

The editor of a Sunday newspaper had written to Wade asking for an appreciation of Charles Davenport. By the evening post came a more urgent letter.

'My dear Mark,

I really cannot allow your refusal. You were Davenport's intimate friend, everyone knows it, and you have consistently praised him in the past. Don't you see how strange it would look if anyone else did the appreciation? Your silence would certainly be taken as condemnation. . . .

How could he explain that he had praised Charles's books only in the context of the living! Just as the head boy of a school becomes insignificant when he moves out into the world, so Davenport had become insignificant the moment he had graduated into the gigantic company of the dead.

'Charles Davenport. An appreciation.'

He wrote the heading, and then sat for many minutes with his eyes on the paper. 'Outstanding biographer of his time . . . his humorous, deeply sceptical personality . . . astringent and perceptive study. . . .

There wasn't a phrase which he hadn't written, perhaps written many times in the last twenty years. Wade suddenly shivered at his writing table. He looked out at the woods where he had walked with Davenport only a week before, now enchanted by the late September sun. 'I'll show', Charles had said, 'the desperate meanness of old Brahms, the utterly drab, unlovely character'. At that moment under the beeches Davenport had held Brahms in the palm of his hand, the tiny privilege of the living. How he had exploited his privilege. And so Wade thought of the insignificance of talent. He himself . . .

'Mark Wade', he wrote, 'An appreciation'.

He wrote bitterly and fluently. 'Today he is a literary pundit, feared even by his arrogant juniors: tomorrow his only hope of resurrection lies in the casual interest of some amused collector of bric-à-brac. The literary critic is the Ozymandias of our times.'

* * * *

On the next morning Wade inspected with the vicar the selected site of Davenport's grave. It was in a bleak extension of

the churchyard, a morsel of open field fenced off for the invading dead. Up to now only two small mounds had appeared there, each capped by a glass dome of artificial flowers.

'Mrs. Davenport wishes a simple stone', said Wade. 'The inscription will be purely factual.'

'I'm surprised', said the vicar, 'that you didn't think a cremation more suitable. Wouldn't he have wished it?'

'He had no preference, Mr. Townsend.'

The vicar sighed, and dug his heel into the clay. 'It's a fine view, you know.' His old weather-beaten face was lifted to the wind. Wade looked over a trellis of poplars to the white chalk gashes of the downs.

'You'd wish for a view?'

'Yes', said the vicar, 'I confess I'd prefer to be buried with a view.'

After this Wade visited the undertaker again, and the local caterer. For the guests would be entitled to refreshment after their little pilgrimage of affection.

The morning of the funeral was as fine as all the five days had been since Davenport's death. Wade took Lucy to the church at eleven o'clock, her arm pressing heavily on his.

Lister had gone there earlier, and he met them in the churchyard. He showed now an embarrassing enthusiasm for his task, his grey face merry in the sun, his tired eyes wide open, his whole stance as confident as a priest's who had never known a doubt.

'It's really an opportunity', he said. 'I mean to show that a funeral service can be every bit as dignified and impressive without the aid of dogma. I do trust, Mrs. Davenport, that you will find my arrangement satisfactory.'

'Not long, you understand,' said Wade.

'Twenty minutes. I've timed it.' He looked at his watch. 'I must run,' and he bounced away round the corner of the church.

The London train arrived at eleven five, and at ten past the hour all the guests came in together. As he was sitting in the front pew, close beside the bleak unflowered coffin, Wade couldn't tell who had come, or, which interested him more, who had stayed away. After a few minutes the shuffling ceased and a church-silence descended on the congregation, punctuated by coughs. No organ heralded the appearance of Canon Lister. He came quietly into the nave from the vestry door, and walked to the lectern.

He was wearing no vestments, only a black tweed suit and a clerical collar. His whole appearance was unspeakably drab and depressing, suggesting, not enlightened deism or rational Christianity, but the Nonconformist aridity of provincial towns. Under the round grey transept it seemed to Wade a shocking gesture of ugliness, and he clenched his hands in miserable anticipation.

'My friends.' Lister's tone was clearly intended to be conversational, but it cracked uneasily, for Lister wasn't used to conversation. 'My friends, we have come together to pay, each of us in his own way, our respects to the eternal mystery of death. . . .'

This little opening comment was so tangled with qualifications, with deference to wide variety of belief, that it became quite unintelligible. The prayer which followed was all in the same language. 'Oh, divine spirit manifested in men. . . .' It was clear that Lister was delighted with this solution, for it reappeared constantly throughout the service. There were no hymns: these obscure prayers were punctuated by obscure readings from the Revelation. Lucy Davenport, who had leaned forward in eager anticipation of shocks to her susceptibilities, soon sat back again and paid no further attention. Wade, on the other hand, was deeply shocked, and deeply ashamed that the responsibility was inescapably his.

'Mr. Mark Wade,' said Lister, 'will now give a short address.'

He was startled to find that he could hardly move. For thirty years he had treated public speaking with the easy indifference of habit. He knew that he spoke fluently, and that he was appreciated. But now he was unnerved, paralysed on his seat. He pushed himself off the pew and groped his way like a robot to the lectern. Turning there, he saw them for the first time, some forty or fifty men and women scattered in groups about the church. In that first glance, standing with his arms splayed across the wings of the eagle, Wade recognized one familiar face after another. The Law, the Arts, the Civil Service, country house life . . . to each upturned face he could attach an instantaneous label, and each face appeared to accept, gravely and a little pompously, the label he had given it. Collectively they were Charles Davenport's friends and relations—but united by far more than that. They were a strong little wedge of English life. They lived

in drawing-rooms and studies, they travelled in Italy, they bought pictures and read foreign books.

Wade felt helpless when he looked at them, when he looked at his friends: they were as inadequate as the service had been.

'My task,' he said, 'should not be a difficult one. We have met here to think of our dead friend, to estimate the great loss that we have suffered. In our hearts we all bear fragments of Charles Davenport; and we must all feel ourselves enriched by these private legacies. It would be impudent of me to pretend that I can paint his picture. All I may do is to suggest some of these qualities which we shall most severely miss. I believe it is right that we view Charles's death as our bereavement, rather than as an occasion of sympathy or pity. He would have wished neither sympathy nor pity for himself. He had lived a full and happy life, accomplishing enough in his sixty years to have satisfied a far more ambitious man. It is certain that we shall think in these days of acute sorrow more of Charles than of Davenport, more of the friend we knew than of the biographer we admired. We shall remember the delight we felt in his conversation, the fine flights of his imagination, the dry self-depreciation with which he was for ever pricking his own bubbles.'

Wade paused. His notes were concise and lucid, yet he paused in sudden confusion as though he had suffered some monstrous interruption. He looked up from the eagle and saw that the attention of his audience was exemplary. From every angle serious white discs faced full towards him; nobody had coughed or shuffled or interrupted in any way the fine swell of his oration. He looked again at his notes, 'C's special humour . . . the unique in C . . . the War. . . .' Wade picked up the neat squares of paper and pushed them back into his breast pocket. He leant heavily forward across the eagle.

'Let's do him the courtesy of seeing him whole.' His voice had changed; it had become harsh and loud. 'The best legacy Charles left us was his hatred of humbug. What did we say of him a week ago? How did we discuss him when he wasn't with us? We agreed that Charles's last book had settled a question which we had debated for years: it settled that he was a failure. From here I can see many of you with whom I myself discussed his failure, and the reasons for it. You will remember the conclusion we came to, a conclusion which many of us had first suspected many years ago.

Charles's books had shown no development: they had shown, for that matter, no deterioration. His last book was no worse than his first, but neither was it any better. From this, our judgment of Davenport, we went on to a judgment of our friend, of Charles as we knew him in everyday life. Because we were devoted to him, we judged him sympathetically, yet most of us admitted that Charles suffered as a man from the same weakness which marred him as a writer. I knew him first when he was twenty-five, some of you knew him much earlier than that. He was ready-made: he seemed to have sprung from the womb with all his qualities, good and bad, already fully developed. His life was at least normally eventful; he suffered losses, disappointments, tragedies; he enjoyed great happiness, he fought four years of war. But nothing changed him: he learned no lessons. For his good qualities we rejoiced, but for his bad qualities we came near to despair.'

Wade paused again. He was aware of a faint stir below him; many of the disks had turned away; somebody was whispering.

'Charles Davenport wasn't a great man, yet more than most of us, he showed qualities of greatness. You will remember the high predictions made for him long ago. There was no single sensational moment which marked his failure to fulfil those predictions, yet our vague suspicion of failure grew until it hardened into a certainty. And it is the failure which we must consider now, for it was the most important thing about him. There's no need to discuss his charm, his wit, his great intellectual brilliance. It is only the lack which we can fruitfully consider.'

There was a din from the front pew as Lucy Davenport pushed noisily into the aisle. Her flat heel-less shoes clapped on the stone, and the church door opened and slammed, a round brief arch of green and blue.

'He lacked depth. He lacked patience.' But Wade had to pause again, to allow four or five other people to leave the church. 'Both in his personal and in his literary judgments Charles was as obstinate as he was superficial. His comments were always amusing and often illuminating, but neither wit nor illumination probed deep. And yet we all know that nothing would persuade him to reconsider. He lacked that profound and humble curiosity which is a true mark of greatness.'

By now he was talking to a moving audience; he was talking to their backs.

'We respected Davenport for his talent; we were grateful for the brilliance of his company. We were deeply fond of him, and our affection embraced his faults. Yet those faults precluded love. Davenport would take nothing from any of us: he didn't consider that he needed anything we could offer him. This precluded love because it is impossible to love someone to whom we may not give.'

Lister was still in his seat, a stiff figure with black legs crossed, a statue in its niche. But by now only one of the secular visitors remained, a tiny dim old lady far back in the darkest corner of the church. Wade recognized Davenport's mother, and he addressed his last words deliberately to the empty front pew.

'Charles achieved far more than most of us can hope to achieve, and enough to satisfy a lesser man. But the final summing-up must judge achievements by potentialities, and by this judgment Charles Davenport was a failure.'

As he stood down from the eagle Wade was attacked by a tumult of giddiness; and he rested one hand on the coffin while the black pews revolved in his eyes. Lister uncrossed his legs, and leaned forward with a hand on each knee. Wade shook his head.

'I imagine they'll be outside', he said. 'I mean the bearers.'

Lister stood up and Wade followed him down the aisle. The midday sun blinded them at the door, and they stood for a moment side by side.

'Fine'! a dry voice croaked in the sun beside him. 'I congratulate you, Mr. Wade.'

He looked down at old Mrs. Davenport, bent like a witch over her stick. 'I'm glad you thought it fine', he said. Lister was beckoning from the corner of the church, and when Wade followed him there he saw that all the guests had assembled round the grave.

'Please, Lister', he said, 'the normal service now'. He saw the four bearers walk sombrely across the grass, and he turned to leave.

'I always knew it, Mr. Wade. I always told them he was no good. A shallow, swanky boy. . . .'

Wade hurried quickly away, away from the dry poison voice and the four strong bearers approaching with their arms hanging stiff at their sides.

ANTHONY GOLDSMITH (Lt.)

Tryeplyev, . . . to my mind the present-day theatre is nothing but routine, superstition. When the curtain rises, and lit by artificial light, in a room with three walls, these great geniuses, the priests of the sacred art, show how people eat, drink, love, walk, wear their jackets; when out of banal scenes and phrases they try to fish a moral—a tiny little moral, easily comprehensible and useful for everyday needs; when in a thousand variations one and the same thing is offered me, one and the same—I run and run, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower, which weighed on his brain with its vulgarity.

Sorin: You can't dispense with the theatre.

(Tchéhov. *The Seagull*.)

SERIOUS modern authors seldom write for the theatre. They hesitate, because they believe that managers are only interested in trivial work. They have a modest but assured market for their novels, essays and poems; why should they trouble to write plays that will probably never be performed?

There is some justification for their point of view. Primarily, it is a question of economics. A novel which sells five thousand copies at eight-and-six will make a profit for the publisher; but a play which sells five thousand eight-and-sixpenny seats and nothing more is a financial failure. Books are easily distributed, and the publisher can find patrons in every part of the world. The drama is less mobile; and the much larger public which is needed to make a play successful can be drawn only from the London area—for London, with its forty-odd playhouses, still dominates the dramatic life of the country. The theatres are too big to be filled by the few Londoners who are both well-to-do and intelligent, and, while the publisher can afford to produce books for the few, the theatrical manager is compelled to cater for the many. But even here his scope is limited. His expenses are so high that he cannot offer cheap tickets in vast quantities and so attract a universal audience. The best he can do is to provide a few seats at low prices in the more inaccessible parts of the house. Indeed, the really poor are practically excluded from the London

theatres. The working-man is not prepared to spend the few shillings reserved for family entertainment on fares to the West End and cramped quarters in the gallery. He will go, in greater comfort, to his local cinema. And so the manager, if he is to avoid bankruptcy, is forced to address himself to the only public that can be relied on to pay his prices with regularity—a public composed of the urban and suburban middle class.

Naturally, this audience has to be supplied with the sort of entertainment it likes. Its members have rarely had the opportunity to cultivate a fastidious taste in drama. Their predilections, which have varied considerably in the last forty years, have generally borne some relation to their economic environment. In the early days of the century they felt completely secure. They were so confident of their invulnerability that they could appreciate plays which dealt seriously with controversial issues. They were willing to be reminded of social injustices, since they were sure that the faults could be remedied without endangering their own prosperity. *Strife* and *The Silver Box* made Galsworthy famous; and the modern reader of Granville Barker's plays is startled at the strength of satire which an Edwardian audience was prepared to imbibe. Criticism of society became fashionable; and elements of it may be detected even in the lighter works of Maugham and Pinero. There was also Bernard Shaw; but then, as now, he held a special position. He far outdistanced his contemporaries in the audacity of his arguments, and the skill and vigour with which he expressed them; nevertheless the public accepted him, because they held the comforting conviction that he was not quite in earnest, that, in fact, he did not mean a word of it. His plays exploded, not as bombs, but as fireworks, with a brilliant yet harmless scintillation.

After 1918 a change of taste became perceptible. The middle classes had been badly shaken by the war and the unrest that had followed it. They began to lose faith in their own indispensability. They could not help being aware that there was something wrong with the world, but they had an uneasy feeling, on which they did not care to dwell, that whatever changes were effected would probably be at their expense. Plays which dealt at all profoundly with social problems tended to reinforce this disquieting presentiment. Such productions were generally described as 'unpleasant' or 'bitter', and carefully avoided. As a result

many excellent pieces failed, including Maugham's *For Services Rendered*, Priestley's *Cornelius*, and, finest of all, *The Maitlands*, by Ronald Mackenzie, whose untimely death was a tragedy for the English theatre. These works were in no sense political propaganda. They merely expressed a pessimistic view of contemporary life—a view which subsequent events have done little to discredit. It was not surprising that the public was unwilling to pay for the privilege of listening to unpalatable truths. What they wanted from the theatre was solace and reassurance.

Hence arose an interesting theatrical phenomenon—the cult of the Cosy Play. In this type of drama the characters bore a recognizable likeness to the members of the audience. The setting was familiar—a small country home, a Kensington family or a suburban household. But the likeness was never exact; the figures on the stage showed the spectators, not as they really were, but as they liked to imagine themselves—wiser, more humorous, better-looking. The atmosphere was one of good-natured whimsicality. There was always a happy ending. Serious problems were sometimes touched upon, but the solutions propounded were invariably such as to soothe rather than disturb. It was, however, no easy matter to make a name as a Cosy Playwright. Knowledge of the theatre and skill in construction were prerequisites of success. John Van Druten was for a time the leader of the school; but he was superseded by Dodie Smith, who brought the Cosy Play to its highest perfection. In a series of remarkable successes this authoress gave a picture of middle-class life that had all the fidelity of a touched-up photograph. Combining a genuine sense of the dramatic with a gift for narrative, she showed an extraordinary aptitude for the subtle distortion of reality. She excelled in presenting family relationships, which were often strained, but only superficially. Playwrights, such as Rodney Acland, who shed a more penetrating light on the struggle between the generations, found their path to fame considerably harder.

Nearly as popular as the Cosy Play was the artificial comedy, which was the speciality of Frederick Lonsdale and Noel Coward. Here the audience could not identify itself completely with the characters, who were always wealthy and often aristocratic. Their principal task was to commit expensive sins on behalf of the audience; for this purpose a certain moral laxity was permitted to

them; they were encouraged to talk cynically and behave outrageously. In consequence, the artificial comedy was often extremely amusing. Between it and the Cosy Play lay the sphere of light comedy, which, being completely unpretentious, often produced work of unusual merit, such as Maugham's *Our Betters*, and Rattigan's *French Without Tears*.

Nevertheless, although the exigencies of economics and the peculiar nature of the London audience deprived much good drama of its reward, some admirable plays did win general approval. Mackenzie's *Musical Chairs* and Priestley's *Time and the Conways* ran for many months. The intellectual who supposes that good plays must either remain unproduced, or fail, is often ignorant of what a good play is. He despises the commercial theatre because it deals in false values and shallow emotion—forgetting that most popular plays, however slight their content, owe their success in the last resort to sound construction and technical skill. To tell a story vividly, to make characters live on the stage, to hold an audience—these are aims which can only be achieved through careful application and long experience. The modern author who turns playwright often does so in a patronizing spirit. Condescendingly, he decides to devote a part of his genius to the rejuvenation of the moribund theatre, and he dashes off a play without having made any prolonged study of the technique of dramatic writing. Thus *The Ascent of F.6*, by Auden and Isherwood, makes impossible demands on the producer, and the passages of naturalistic dialogue, which were doubtless intended to put the commercial dramatist in his place, are thin and flat, like the paintings of a student who has not learnt to draw. Jean Cocteau, in his introduction to *Les Parents Terribles*, grandly claimed to have rediscovered the 'golden thread of the theatre', and boasted of having purified the stage by eliminating 'les domestiques et les coups de téléphone'. But since his play was written in the modern realistic convention, the exclusion of servants and telephones tended to hinder rather than aid the development of his plot. He had not learned to overcome the technical problems of his art, and, although he provided the bedroom, which formed the setting of his first and third acts, with five doors, he was still unable to contrive convincing exits and entrances for his characters.

Some writers have condemned the excessive naturalism of the

popular theatre, believing that grandeur of design cannot be combined with a mass of photographic detail. They have therefore tried to elevate the drama by reintroducing a stylized form, with verse-dialogue and choruses. Certainly the Greeks, the Chinese, and the Elizabethans achieved excellent results in this manner, with a minimum of scenery and properties. But the dramatist who dispenses with adventitious aids does not thereby free himself from the necessity of learning his job. On the contrary, his story must be more compelling, his characterization more skilful, if he is to create an illusion with these austere resources. Above all, he must have an exact knowledge of what is and is not theatrically effective. It is Shakespeare's truly professional sense of the theatre, much more than the beauty of his verse, which makes *Hamlet* a sure success whenever it is performed.

Unluckily the recent exponents of poetic drama have been unable to grasp this essential fact. Their failure was not entirely their fault. The whole trend of modern literature worked against them. In the last fifty years the artist has been more and more concerned with himself and less and less with the outside world. Formerly, every writer who aspired to greatness was something of an encyclopædist. He took it for granted that he should know the structure of society from top to bottom, that he should be acquainted with science, politics and philosophy, and the processes of industry and agriculture. It was this universalism that gave breadth and solidity to the novels of Balzac, Flaubert and Tolstoy. But by the end of the nineteenth century the complexity of society and the extent of human knowledge had grown to such a degree that no individual, however gifted, could build a complete synthesis of the contemporary world. Zola was perhaps the last great author to make this attempt. The artist, in despair, was thrown back on himself. The balance shifted; and in Proust and Henry James it was the mind of the writer and not society at large that occupied the foreground. As the twentieth century advanced, the external world became not only too intricate but also too chaotic to be contemplated with advantage; and the tendency to introspection was accentuated. The pathetic fallacy was inverted, and authors, instead of portraying nature in terms of their own souls, portrayed their own souls in terms of nature. With Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot literature approached the

limits of intelligibility, until (as in the later works of James Joyce) it consisted almost entirely of private jokes, private associations and private vocabularies. The retreat from reality was an inevitable process, and some of those who took part in it were so gifted that they were nearly able to turn defeat into victory. At the same time the new fashion was welcomed by second-rate writers. They discovered that it was no longer necessary to embark on extensive researches before composing; and they used the device of obscurity to conceal the fact that they had nothing to say. But when this manner was applied to the theatre, the results were unfortunate. For theatrical audiences have certain obstinate and unshakable prejudices. They demand a plot they can follow and characters they can believe in. These the modern author was unable to supply; as his absorption in his ego increased, so his interest in narrative and characterization declined. A play is a co-operative undertaking, a partnership between dramatist, actors, producer and audience. The egocentric preoccupations of the playwright broke the contact; and the plays of this school were sustained only by the curiosity of intellectual snobs. These persons tend to bestow their favours on any work they cannot understand. Remembering the eminent critics who denounced Cézanne and Van Gogh, they reflect that, after all, it is safer to admire. It would be a pity to be the first to declare that the Emperor has no clothes on, when posterity might decide that he was fully dressed after all. And so a *succès d'estime* is generated, and the flattered author never realizes the enormity of his transgressions.

But the playwright who has overcome these difficulties is faced with further obstacles. He has to contend with the competition of the cinema. The cinema has surpassed the stage in realism. It has vastly extended the area in which dramatic events can occur. An audience, coming straight to the theatre from the pictures, feels faintly surprised at the way in which all stage characters insist on using the same sitting-room for quarrelling, making love and exchanging confidences. True, they occupy the room in relays and seldom interrupt one another; but there never seems any good reason why these scenes should not take place up the staircase on the right, or in the garden which can be seen through the french windows at the back. At the same time it is a curious fact that audiences no longer insist, as they did thirty

years ago,¹ on being provided with three or four different changes of scene for every play. The cinema has killed the spectacular melodrama of the type of *Good Luck*, which included a motor-smash, a shipwreck and a horse-race with real horses. Some able playwrights have taken advantage of these very limitations to enhance their dramatic effects. Robert Ardrey laid the scene of *Thunder Rock* in a lighthouse, and the impression of confinement and isolation which his single set produced was of immense value to him in the creation of atmosphere. Ronald Mackenzie's *The Maitlands* is the story of an impoverished family, the members of which are compelled by their circumstances to live together in a small house. The crowding of the stage and the lack of privacy serve to strengthen the sense of frustration which is the basis of the play. There has been a noticeable tendency to return to the unities of time, place and action; but the single set imposes a greater burden on the dramatist's imagination, which only perfect technical skill will enable him to carry.

There is another and more fundamental problem which faces the playwright who chooses English Society as his theme. Good drama must present a conflict of emotions, and these can only be conveyed to the audience by means of dialogue. But English people do not readily give utterance to their profoundest feelings. Emotional repression has become the custom; and when the Englishman does say something that he deeply feels he says it obliquely or inadequately. Our verbal poverty may be partly due to an exaggerated industrialism, which has distorted the proportions of English life, creating self-consciousness and sophistication. Urbanization has weakened the sense of tradition and continuity which is needed to nourish the beauty of a language. Unindustrialized peoples, however limited their outlook, seem to achieve a spontaneous harmony with their surroundings, which is beyond the power of city dwellers. This harmony is reflected in their speech, which has the same natural grace as the home-made implements which adorn their houses. The Irish and the Russians possess in a marked degree this gift for poetic conversation; and, as they are also impulsive and demonstrative by disposition, they made ideal subjects for the dramatist. This fact was

¹ 'A playgoer will pay out a large sum now and again to see a gorgeous production, but he feels he is being defrauded at paying the same amount for a mere comedy with a few people in it.' *The Bystander*, July 1905.

noted and exploited by Turgenev, Tchegov, J. M. Synge and Sean O'Casey. It has given them a flying start; and the English playwright, condemned to deal with his inarticulate compatriots, finds difficulty in catching up. If he sticks to realism and makes his characters talk in the clichés of the moment, or in half-sentences, composed of 'sort-ofs' and 'I means' his work appears prosaic. If, on the other hand, he encourages them to quote Keats or interpolates, at a given moment, a carefully written purple passage, a lack of spontaneity becomes discernible. Only by supreme subtlety in the selection of dialogue can the playwright solve this formidable problem.

It is the duty of all ambitious authors to write for the theatre. The tradition of Shakespeare and Sheridan must be carried on. To encourage them to do so, certain changes will have to be made in the existing system. It must become possible, geographically and economically, for everyone in the country to go to the play at least once a week. How this is to be done is an open question. State subsidies may be the answer, or possibly the creation of a network of repertory theatres, under wise direction. The expenses of production must be reduced to enable managers to put on experimental and unconventional plays. The provision of a wider audience will supply an excellent test for young playwrights. It will then be made clear whether their work really has a universal appeal, or whether its charm is only perceptible to their immediate circle. In addition, the members of the audience require education. Good taste in drama, as in wine, can be acquired through intelligent instruction.

Meanwhile, the writer who intends to become a dramatist will go into training. He will frequent the theatre and learn to gauge the reactions of the audience. He will observe the tense, concentrated silence which a well contrived passage imposes; he will mark the moment when an occasional cough, a rustle of movement, a faint restlessness, betrays the flagging of attention. He will be able to distinguish between the nervous giggling of the upper circle and the genuine laugh that sweeps the whole house. He will recognize the ecstatic murmur which greets the appearance of a dog on the stage. He will not be above learning from his commercial rivals; he will become a connoisseur of acting, and will prepare parts, as Tchegov did, for his favourite actors. He will discover what curtain lines are effective, how best he may

explain a situation with clarity but without obviousness, and how long he may safely leave two characters alone on the stage. After a year or two spent in these preliminary exercises, he may begin to write. The type of play he chooses will depend on his temperament. Tragedy, comedy, revue, pantomime, symbolism, fantasy, poetic drama—nothing need be beyond his scope, once his technical education is complete. And if he is gifted with perseverance, imagination and creative ability, he may well write a play that will stand revival.

SELECTED NOTICES

The Fear of Freedom, by Erich Fromm. Kegan Paul. 15s.

During the last fifteen years or so many sociologists and some psychoanalysts have been fascinated by the task of combining psychoanalysis and sociology, mostly of a Marxian brand. It was a highly heretical undertaking. Freudian psychoanalysis is, apparently, tolerated in the Soviet Union, but its interference with social doctrine is severely frowned upon. At the same time, Freudians tend to look askance at the intrusion of Marxism into their realm, with reason, for no psychoanalyst aiming at a merging of Freud and Marx has ever remained an orthodox Freudian. Fromm himself is a case in point. Also the result of previous attempts at a merging of the two doctrines was more often an incoherent hotch-potch than serious science. Yet the more intelligent Marxists badly felt the need—and the lack—of a social psychology; while the better sort of psychoanalyst must be ashamed of much that was produced in the pages of the periodical *Imago* under the heading of Freudian ‘explanations’ of social and historical facts.

I believe it is no exaggeration to say that Fromm’s is the first serious contribution to the problem. It is characteristic that his attempt has been taken up, in this country, by Professor K. Mannheim, who has himself developed under the strong influence of both Marxism and Freudism, without adopting an orthodox attitude to either. *The Fear of Freedom* appears as the first volume of ‘The International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction’, of which Professor Mannheim is the editor. One must be grateful to him for this opening move of his new enterprise.

Why is it so difficult to combine Freud’s findings, not only with Marxism, but with any sociology? Because these finds reach into a sphere which is removed from the social sphere. It is a truism that this is not completely so. The core of Freudian psychology, after all, is the assumption that normal character and all its pathological deviations go back to the influences undergone by the child in the family during the first five to six years of its life. The family is part of Society, shaped by it, different in many respects in different periods and in different social groups. It seems easy to prove that the

effects of, say, a matriarchal social structure upon the child's development must altogether differ from those of a patriarchal society. This approach to the problem has become more tempting since B. Malinowski, the great deceased Polish sociologist, has demonstrated that patriarchal and matriarchal societies are no more than 'ideal types', and that the real types of family structure invariably combine elements of the patriarchal and of the matriarchal ideal type, in infinite variation. It should seem an obvious and not too difficult task to explain the typical character structure of a period and of a group by the specific conditioning of the child by a specific socially and historically determined type of family life. Unfortunately, it seems easier in the abstract than it is in practice. For Freud's findings are stubborn things. A few general formulæ may be fitted into a scheme of social psychology. But if we come to the details of Freud's material, we are rapidly brought up against facts which just do not allow of an easy fitting into any sociological pattern.

Freud himself once insisted, as a triumph of his views, that the psycho-analytic group in Calcutta had found, among its patients, exactly the same 'complexes', exactly the same structure of the subconscious, as are found among European patients. If that is so—and Freud, to the end, would not have doubted it—then every attempt at making the psychology of the subconscious fit into social psychology is doomed to failure. Sociology is concerned, in the first place, with differences. It takes it for granted that men have certain physico-chemical, biological and even psychological structures in common. It wants to know, however, why and how, despite this, the psychology of a man in Wall Street differs from that of a man in Calcutta. If, apart from individual differences the subconscious of both is essentially the same, then the psychology of the subconscious has obviously no contribution to make to the solution of this problem. A view apparently borne out by the entirely unintentional jocularity of many Freudian interpretations of historical facts.

But, it must be asked, how can Freud maintain such a view if family structures, which he himself regards as so essential, differ so widely? Here Fromm's criticism starts. It is, he says, because Freud's approach, despite his insistence upon the importance of social groups such as the family is mainly biological.

The 'Oedipus complex' (Freud's famous central discovery) must not simply be understood to result from the plain jealousy and envy of the little boy for his father. The Oedipus complex would be nothing of importance if it did not issue into the 'castration complex', the fear of the little boy for his physical integrity. And though it is easy to accumulate anthropological and folkloristic material to prove that castration once was not a phantasy but a real threat, there is little enough in most infantile stories in Western Society today to justify the fear of castration as the result of an actual threat. This fear is archaic in character, it develops upon the slightest provocation or no provocation at all, it is really part of man's hereditary racial endowment. Freud would probably have maintained that this fear must be traced back to an earlier geological period.

Thus even the Oedipus complex, this apparently entirely social fact, forming an adequate basis for a system of social psychology, is really only a super-structure upon a biological basis. It is impossible, all Freudians agree, to avoid the Oedipus and castration complex, even by removing the little boy from

all conceivable adult male competitors for the exclusive love of his mother. Sociologists will be inclined to ask: How can you account for this, seeing that the Oedipus complex is a sociological fact? But Freudians, with one of Freud's own favourite quotations, would reply in the words of the French psychiatrist Charcot: 'Cela n'empêche pas d'exister.' In other words: We do not very well understand it ourselves; but the fact is that we have observed it invariably under sufficient safeguards. To which all doubters will retort by questioning the accuracy of psychoanalytic observation. To which the psychoanalyst will reply with a polite invitation to the doubter to be analysed himself, adding that, besides his new insights, he will gain a lot for his health by the process. I leave it open how far this last promise will materialize. But I am pretty sure that, after a period of psychoanalysis, the former doubter will be convinced that the roots of the Oedipus and castration complex are deeper than can be explained by this or that incidental infantile experience.

Fromm himself, regrettably, does not deal with the Oedipus complex proper, and by this omission loses contact, to a certain extent, with previous formulations of the problem, however inadequate. We are promised, in his introduction, a general character study of modern man, to which the present work is only a preface. To this we are eagerly looking forward, hoping that the gap will be closed. In the meantime, Fromm does base his contention of the fundamentally biological character of the Freudian doctrine upon other aspects of it, which refer to still earlier layers of the subconscious. More and more, psychoanalysts have come to recognize that the individual variations in the reaction to the Oedipus complex and to the fear of castration are pre-determined by what has happened to the subject in still earlier childhood, from lactation, and even from embryonic life onwards. Here the biological view reigns unchallenged. Early childhood is seen to fall into various phases more or less precisely limited in time (if the child's development does not correspond, on the whole, to the time-table, something is gravely wrong with its biological endowment). Each phase is determined by the preponderance of the child's interest in one 'erogenous' zone on his own body. During the first two years or so the child's contacts with the social world are mainly limited to the mother, whose chief role is biological, and the child's earliest development is mainly a biological, not a social affair. More and more, psychoanalysts incline to the view that it is really these first two years which are decisive. There is only one step from this view to the other view that (apart from the rare cases of violent catastrophes in the earliest period of life) it is really a child's biological endowment which determines its development. Freudism is about to come round full circle. Starting with a sharp attack upon an exclusively physico-biological approach to medicine, with the contention that psychological and often even physical disease can be cured by giving the subject an insight into his repressed early life-story, it now more and more discards the importance of the story, and emphasizes the overwhelming importance of largely unalterable factors in early life. Combined with this is a considerable change of emphasis in practical psychoanalysis. In the early stages access to the deeper layers of the subconscious was obviously much more difficult and limited than it is today, after K. Abraham gave a full technique of the study of pre-Oedipean early child-psychology. Yet this

advance in knowledge and technique, which normally ought to produce confidence in complete success of the method, has been accompanied by an increasing querying of the therapeutic value of the uncovering of the profoundest layers of the subconscious. More and more the quest arises for a method which would bring healing without boring into infinite depths. Fromm, in the present work, does not mention these technical problems of psychoanalysis. But I know that, like all other members of the school not content with a mechanical use of techniques, accepted once and for all, he has been deeply impressed with them. His unorthodoxy is explained at least as much by the technical experiences of the psychiatrist as by the puzzles Freudism presents to the sociologist. His basic objection that, ultimately, the Freudian approach leads back to an entirely biological conception of the psyche, is valid in the field of medical practice as much as in that of social psychology.

Fromm attempts to solve both the medical and the sociological problem by a radical turn-about. He maintains that the biological (sexual) causation postulated by the Freudian school is largely fictitious. He does not deny the validity of the bulk of the Freudian findings in the realm of infantile sexuality (I leave out of account a few highly technical points discussed in other contributions of his). But he denies that individual neurosis and general maladjustment such as revealed in Nazi psychology can be ultimately traced to the biology of sex. He maintains that the psychology of the individual, as well as the psychological crisis of our age, can be understood only from the angle of 'self-expression' and its disturbances. What man really wants is not simply satisfaction of his biological drives. If that were the case, animals, which are subjected to more biological thwarting than little man, would have to be more neurotic than men. The great need of man is self-expression, a widening of his individuality. That individuality includes love, a widening of the self not through the possession of an object, but through the extension of the self, so as to include other selves which are cherished as much as one's own self.

Fromm attempts to trace this need for self-expression back into earlier stages of the development of life. The whole process of the development of life is a process of increasing individuation. The history of mankind only repeats the history of life as a whole. The history of the human individual only repeats, as should be the case, the history of the human species. Freedom is only the subjective reflex of the objective fact that we are differentiated individuals, not tied by inborn instincts, but able and obliged to live and decide by ourselves. The quest for freedom, then, becomes the main content of human history in its subjective aspect, and the occasional abandonment of this quest, in the individual and in the group, the chief disturbance of this fundamental urge. In all this Fromm is so close to Bergson that I wonder why he does not point out the similarity himself. This is not orthodox Freudism, to be sure, nor is it Marxism. That, however, does not prevent it from being perfectly true, though perhaps somewhat one-sided.

Accordingly, Fromm lays stress, in his psychology of the subconscious, not upon those factors which influence the physiological functioning of sex, but upon those which determine the full expression of the self in love. He traces the psychological troubles of mankind in its present phase to the pre-

valence of the sado-masochistic component in their feelings, to the prevalence, in terms of social psychology, of the 'authoritarian character'. Freud, he points out, originally regarded sadism (and its inversion, masochism) as rooted in one of the pre-Oedipian phases of child sexuality. He later had to admit that it was not wholly sexual in character, and explained it as a composite of sexual drives with a hidden 'death-drive', an innate tendency in life to destroy itself. Fromm discards the death-drive, and will be supported on this point by many Freudians. His conception, ingenious and impressive, is that human destructiveness goes exactly as far as the thwarting—not of biological needs, but—of self-expression. Whatever man cannot express in creativeness he expresses in destruction. This view can be solidly supported with arguments drawn from the physio-psychological researches of Bernfeld and Feitelberg, who have nearly succeeded in proving that all psychological energy is one and that the assumption of two basically different types of psychological energy is untenable. Destructiveness, then, is the need of self-expression thwarted in the outside world and turned against its own root, the self (masochism) or against the outside world (sadism).

Having got so far, Fromm finds it easy to develop a system of social psychology, which is Freudism put upside down. The primary psychological need of the individual is not to get physical satisfaction from the outside world (the worst starvation does not produce neuroses if it is due to purely natural, not to social, causes), but the quest for self-expression in the outside world. If this is thwarted, destructiveness sets in, secondarily affecting also the biological functions. We are confronted, at bottom, with a new psychology, which has no more than its historical origin and some of its subject-matter in common with Freudism.

It is not unimportant to remember that this new psychology has some affinity with the teachings of Jung; the idea that self-expression is the first need of the subconscious would be emphatically welcomed among Jungians. But the closest affinities to Fromm's view can be found in the school of Adler. Fromm has a few critical remarks about Adler, and they are pertinent. Adler, as everybody knows, traces everything to the thwarting of the lust for power, to the individuals' inferiority against other individuals. Fromm retorts that, more often than not, the inferiority is entirely fictitious, and, more fundamentally that the inordinate craving for power is itself a result of the deviation of the individual's normal attitude to life. Only those who are thwarted in adequate self-expression, and are unable to make normal love contacts in the world, are craving for superiority or, conversely, for being swallowed up into a bigger whole. This ambivalent craving for superiority and inferiority is, in his view, precisely the essence of the sado-masochistic attitude to life, which, to him, is almost identical with the neurotic character itself. Adler takes as the normal reaction what is the pathological deviation; he argues as if every individual were by inborn instinct a little Hitler. Or it might be said that he treats the spirit of competition, this most specific psychological reflex of the capitalist order of economic life, as human nature itself. It might also be said that Adler's approach is incredibly narrow. To reduce the rich gamut of human needs of self-expression to the one quest for power!

But all this is only to say that Adler was a narrow-minded fellow who

spoilt a good case. The essence of the Adlerian approach is not the power-motive, however much Adler himself put it into the forefront of his argument, but a view which puts thwarting of the self (or the 'ego', if that expression is preferred) into the centre of psychopathology. A view which puts the self rather than the drives into the centre of psychology must be described as a revised Adlerism rather than as a revised Freudism. One more proof that, in any attempt to develop a social psychology, you are inevitably driven away from Freudian assumptions.

Now to the sociologist it may be a matter of indifference whether something derives from Freud or from Adler, provided only it helps him to understand social psychology. Yet this is not quite so. For abandoning Freudism means, in this case, abandoning Freud's insights concerning early childhood and the subconscious. Much of what Fromm says is very convincing. It strengthens one's feeling that something essential is lacking in Freud, something which can only be approached from an entirely new angle. Yet, while I read Fromm's ingenious interpretation of destructiveness as the result of the thwarting of self-expression, I could not help remembering that little children, at a certain period coming under a precise time-table of development, do tear and break everything within their reach, not as the result of any thwarting of their other activities, but quite simply as an activity lustful in itself. I remembered that Freudians had succeeded in distinguishing two sub-phases of this early infantile sadistic phase, one where cruelty is combined mainly with mastication, and a later one where it is exerted with the whole body. Also, Freudians have shown that these two sub-phases of the sadistic phase are closely connected with parallel phases of sexual development, and accompanied by sexual pleasure. Can all this be treated as more or less irrelevant?

But this is not yet all. It must not be forgotten that the self is mainly a centre of integrated, purposeful action. It is, therefore, if not identical to, yet closely connected with the sphere of conscious life. Every psychology centring round the self tends to emphasize the conscious as against the unconscious or, worse still, tends to minimize their difference and contrast. The strongest objection to Adler, and one the strength of which Fromm is well aware, is, that he rationalizes wholly subconscious motives into intelligible conscious ones. And exactly this objection seems to be valid against Fromm also. His work is subject to an all-pervading tendency to minimize the importance of the unconscious, to deny the fundamental difference between earliest childhood and adulthood, or, at any rate, to minimize their significance for adult maladjustment. Like Jung and Adler, but much more so than Jung, he tends to obliterate the significance of the Freudian findings in the field of child and sexual psychology, and to interpret behaviour as mainly intelligible in terms of the situation of the adult. It is true that, by doing so, he gains a much better jumping ground for a social psychology. But does he not sacrifice many of the fundamental insights which have made of individual psychology a science during the last generation?

At any rate, he does gain a jumping ground for his sociology. For it is now easy for him to interpret the disease of our era, and of Western civilization during the last four hundred years, in terms of the normal relations of the adult. In medieval civilization, he maintains, man had, on the whole, normal

means of self-expression. Here his analysis is much more Marxian than would appear from his scanty quotations of Marx. In the Middle Ages, he would say, in Hegel-Marx terminology, man was not yet alienated from himself. His work had not yet become a commodity, though his products were. He worked for himself, getting a great deal of enjoyment out of his work. His social ties were still natural ties, and appeared to him even more natural than they in fact were. He was not confronted with abstract duties pressed home through the mechanisms of the market and of the law, but with concrete personal ties with his family, his neighbours, his guild fellows. He did not live for gain, but earned to live. Consumption was still the essential aim. We do not further elaborate this well-known picture, of the correctness of which there is little doubt. Fromm goes on to say that as a result of this scope for normal self-expression, God, in the Middle Ages, appeared, in the main, as a good and loving God. He punished but He could be reconciled, like a reasonable father is to his naughty child. Man could achieve God's grace by his own good works.

This social order collapsed towards the end of the Middle Ages, and in the renaissance the modern 'independent individual' was born, the crown of a secular process of individualization. In the world thus transformed those at the top might, to an extent, enjoy themselves still more, but for the masses the position changed radically for the worse, not so much materially but psychologically. In a competitive society, the natural relations between man and man were broken. Struggle, only limited by the law and its protectors, was put into the place of co-operation. Life for gain was put into the stead of gain for life. Labour became a commodity, even the specific psychological characteristics of the individual became a marketable commodity. Man gained a great deal more freedom *from* ties. He lost almost all his freedom *to* make his human contacts and his work means of self-expression. The picture has been drawn before by others. Fromm goes on to discuss the psychological consequences, which are obvious.

The individual is completely lost in this world of freedom, which to most means only freedom from all those ties which make life worth living. He is thrown back into a desperate state of anxiety. The anxiety grows considerably when free competition is going down before monopoly, for now the last opportunity, for the middle classes at any rate, to mould their life by their own efforts, is lost. They feel themselves submerged by gigantic powers they cannot control, powers which almost invariably spell evil. Even during the earliest stages of this development the lower strata reacted, through the medium of Protestantism, with a morality of absolute obedience to the existing power, of abject subservience, of renunciation of all pride, and at the same time with fearful repressed resentment, reflected in the Calvinist idea of a tyrant god who saves and damns man according to his whims. The anxiety, the renunciation of individuality, the self-debasement and the resentment of the Reformation era may have somewhat abated for a time, but are now coming to the surface again as a result of recent developments known to everybody. Those who do not find a normal sphere of self-expression have only the choice between two substitutes: either they must try to enlarge their self by a wild craving for power, or escape the fear of complete isolation by merging themselves into a wider whole, subjecting themselves completely to a stronger will. These are

the ambivalent urges of the authoritarian character, which is the Fascist character. This is the socio-psychology of Fascism.

This, though certainly not a comprehensive treatment of Nazi psychology, is unexceptionable as far as it goes. I do not think, however, that Fromm's explanations would have lost much by completely discarding the psychological apparatus of his deductions. This amounts to repeating in terms of his sociology what has been said above of his psychology: that it discards the subconscious. Despite his wide horizon and his undogmatic combination of various approaches, Fromm has not fully succeeded in making the science of the subconscious fruitful for social psychology. Perhaps it will look different once he publishes his more general views on the subject. I am, however, inclined to see in this partial failure the revelation of a fundamental difficulty, mentioned above. It does not seem possible, not, at any rate, in the present state of knowledge, to combine an ever-deeper delving into the recesses of the individual soul and a practically valuable understanding of the everyday surface behaviour of individuals and groups. The last thing psychotechnics tends to base itself upon in elaborating tests is a profound analysis of the subconscious. Psychological theories seem to fall into two groups: those using a common-sense psychology for the practical understanding of practical things, and those trying to understand at all costs, the abysses. Occasionally, a scholar changes over from one side to the other. Fromm is a case in point. But if, to my mind, he drops too much of what has been gained by four decades of researches into the psychology of the subconscious, his handling of surface psychology has undoubtedly gained from his contact with the psychology of the depths, and has enabled him to understand aspects of modern mass psychology not easily accessible. Looking at it from the opposite angle, that of Marxist sociology, he has succeeded in showing how much can be got out of Marxism if it is used undogmatically and in conscious and critical combination with other methods.

FRANZ BORKENAU

The Colossus of Maroussi. By Henry Miller. (Secker and Warburg.)

GREECE is the central figure in this book, which discloses some of the writer's talents at their best as well as his irritating defects. The reader who is familiar with Henry Miller's style will recognize the art of surprise, the frequent transition from narrative to lyrical monologue, from realities to the realm of dreams, his exaltations and his outbursts, the long tumultuous phrases as though written in a state of frenzy. He will also recognize, with displeasure, his predilection for certain sordid aspects of life.

The Colossus of Maroussi deserves to be read by a large public in this country, which discovered modern Greece more than a century ago. I am thinking of those English travellers (Leake, Hobhouse, Dodwell, etc.), who first began to explore the land where the finest myths of the Aryan race were born, and to study the language and the manners of its present inhabitants before Byron gave his life for Greek independence. It is from those forerunners and from their successors that there came the new way of approaching Greece as a living entity, as a nation which is haunted by a crowded, immemorial past and is yet only half-revealed, half-created, and may well prove to possess a power of

regeneration invaluable to our fading world. Miller has followed the path of these men. His book has been published in London almost simultaneously with James Aldridge's *Signed with Their Honour*, a novel recommended by the Book Society, which is, in a way, another tribute paid to Greece by an English-speaking writer. Aldridge saw Greece at the miraculous time of her victories over the Axis. Miller visited her before. It is to his credit that he guessed her fighting spirit and entered into closer contact with the character of her people.

The *Colossus* is not a travel book and has nothing in common with a novel. The writer tries his best to persuade us that his visit to Greece was a revelation, the greatest date of his life; some parts of his book assume the aspect and the value of an autobiography. One cannot avoid observing that Miller started his journey very much in the mood of his forefathers, the first colonists of America: filled with disgust for the known world. Greece was inevitably bound to offer him a new start, to reopen a window to heaven, to that blue sky which alone enabled the French 'poètes maudits' to continue living and writing poetry. The extent of his despair for the rest of the world is shown by the terms in which he compares the French with the Greek spirit. He had loved France more than anything else in the world—at any rate, far more than his own country. Finally, however, he came to the conclusion that France can only be 'a very beautiful garden', a sort of nursing home. When you start feeling strong, he says, you find that its atmosphere is no longer 'nourishing'. The French spirit, he asserts, has limits that are too obvious and narrow. The Frenchman became a realist because it is 'safe and practical', whereas the Greek is an 'adventurer'. There is truth in this judgment of both parties.

Miller associated the magic of Greece with many things, some futile and some great and immortal. He speaks of the light of Greece—a most elusive subject—and succeeds where others have failed. His pages on this subject can be compared to those of Pericles Ghiannopoulos, a modern Greek writer, very little known outside his country, but one of the most acute observers and keen worshippers of Greek nature who, in the end, drowned himself in the waters of the Saronic Gulf in a fit of æsthetic frenzy.

Two aspects of Greek nature impressed Miller: The peaceful landscape composed of well-balanced forms upon which light bestows a divine clarity, and the chaotic, wild landscape which brings confusion to the mind. This contrast is reflected in the Greek soul. It lies at the root of ancient tragedy. Greek equilibrium came as the result of a struggle, as the outcome of the composition of these 'antinomian spots'. Miller is right in recalling it: 'Out of the fiery anarchy came the lucid, healing metaphysical speculations which even today enthrall the world'. The serene atmosphere of Attica and the form of the Greek islands simply helped the Greek mind to escape the 'death-traps' and establish the sovereignty of reason over the fears and passions which dominate primitive life.

Are we today fully conscious of the value of this victory? Hitler made us realize how precarious its fruits can be. We are, however, too willing to criticize the very essence of our civilization. Henry Miller in the chapter of a new book published in the *HORIZON* last November, went so far, in a moment of irritation, as to express doubts as to whether it is worth while defending

what we possess. The question is a delicate one. The interpreters and apostles of National Socialism have aroused the enthusiasm of their war-like Nation, proclaiming the power of the German race to reform the World. The gods whom the Nordic races worshipped in days of superstition and human sacrifices were the source of their inspiration. Like some of our own writers, the Nazis admire men who are nearer to nature; they appreciate nudism, the splendour of physical strength free from Christian prejudices, the power which instincts can give to Man when unhampered by moral conventions. Would they not have approved of D. H. Lawrence's dream of reviving the religion of the Aztecs, if only the gods of Mexico had been Germanic gods? It would be very disappointing to admit that national egoism alone draws the line of partition between ourselves and our enemies—as it is absurd to believe that our difference lies in matters of legislation. I do not think that such conclusions would be correct; this, however, is hardly the place to attempt a discussion of such matters. But, at all events, it seems improbable to the man of common sense that the revolution which we are hoping for will come after this war with the overthrow of the fundamental principles of our life. A liquidation of the psychological influence exerted by Christianity—something quite independent of religious faith in itself—and a disregard of the 'legacy' of Greece, would transform the world into a spiritual desert. Clearly, Miller believes in Greece alone: 'a vivified Greece can very conceivably alter the whole destiny of Europe'.

It is strange that this thought came to the writer's mind with the image of a rewooded Greece. One can argue that the present dryness of the climate is not the main cause which prevents Greece from delivering her message to the world; but an increased productiveness of the soil and a general prosperity are likely to raise the spiritual level of any nation. Admirers of classical Hellas will be surprised that Miller should find Cnossos and Phaistos the two most inspiring spots. Early Cretan civilization can hardly be ascribed to the 'Hellenic' race, although certain elements of that civilization passed into Greek history and were merged in new forms. The writer's feeling for Minoan times can be explained by his inclination to primeval forms of life and by the fact that imagination, which is the dominant faculty of his mind, is naturally attracted by epochs presenting a larger number of gaps to be filled up.

Being myself a Greek I find my position difficult when I come to speak of more familiar things. I happen to be a friend of Catsimbalis, the man who gave the book its title, and of George Seferis, a fascinating poet of the younger generation, whose creative spirit assimilated the art of P. Valéry and T. S. Eliot, maintaining at the same time its deep roots in the language and tradition of his country. The portrait of Catsimbalis, a man of rare personality imbued with a true love for literature, is made with remarkable perspicacity. His features are magnified but this note of exaggeration is in harmony with the general tone of the book.

It is a pity that Miller did not try to know better the literature, and especially the poetry of modern Greece. His admiration for the nation which withstood so many calamities would have gained in warmth. Since the time of Dionysios Solomos, who, a few years after the War of Independence, was engaged in experiments in lyrical purity anticipating those of Edgar

Allan Poe, Mallarmé and Yeats, the whole process of Greek poetry illustrates the fighting spirit, the sense of revolt which Miller has so well defined in his reflections before the ruins of Epidaure: 'Each one individually must revolt against a way of life which is not his own. The revolt, to be effective, must be continuous and relentless.' The poets of modern Greece have striven to efface the traces which invasion and foreign rule had left on the spirit and language of the nation; it is through their patience, intelligence and affection that the true face of Greece was partly revealed. When this had been accomplished, the inquisitive Greek mind turned towards general and more complicated problems. Man's destiny is the underlying thought in the work of the generation which reached maturity in the first decade after the last war. Angelos Sikelianos and Nicos Kazantzakis are the pre-eminent representatives of this generation. Both surpass the normal standards of humanity. Their various works—lyrical, dramatic, epic—convey a new philosophical vision and stand as a powerful protest against meanness, desertion and death. Had Miller met these two men he would have added new chapters to his book. It may be interesting for the reader to know that Nicos Kazantzakis, who visited England at the outbreak of this war and wrote his impressions of this country in terms of warm sympathy and admiration, is the author of a new *Odyssey* numbering more than 30,000 verses—a monument of spiritual vitality and poetic grandeur. His intellectual evolution has been a no less rich and adventurous *Odyssey*. He passed through many religions, old and new—including Marxism—to find out in the end that the essence of his own god was 'struggle'. It was from the same angle that he envisaged love, as the following verse of his *Odyssey* demonstrates: 'Helena, my old man, means wage war for Helena'. In 1923 he wrote *Salvatores Dei*, a short essay in the form of aphorisms, 'to give expression', as he stated, 'to the anxiety and the hopes of a circle of German, Polish and Russian communists who could no longer breathe within the narrow, old-fashioned, materialistic conception of the Communist idea'. This little book, which reflects the latest and perhaps definitive stage of the writer's spiritual journey, can provide an answer to many questions which today torture our minds.

These few remarks will serve to justify my impression that Miller's book leaves the reader, who knows Greece well, unsatisfied. At some future date, however, the *Colossus of Maroussi* may well prove to have been a prophetic book about Greece—in spite of its defects, its contradictions, and the aggressive spirit in which it has been conceived.

D. NICOLAREÏZIS

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

Blue, decayed streaks of silliness are healthy in art as in cheese.

I have the honour to offer a prize of ten pounds annually, as long as *HORIZON* is published, for the silliest contribution, to be called 'The Alfred Wallis Prize', and to be awarded by subscribers. All contributors will be eligible with preference for the old and famous rather than the young and contemporary. The work need not be complete in itself or in anything else.

Your obedient servant,

EVELYN WAUGH

LAW OFFICES OF

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PENOBSCOT BUILDING, DETROIT

29 December 1942

Dear Mr. Connolly,

I should not think it worth while to notice Henry Miller's article in your November issue except for the fact that this curious medley of Arcadian dreaming and Marxian bitterness is apparently the work of an American and is accepted by you as an accurate picture of my country.

I doubt whether any hostile foreigner has ever regarded the United States with such wildly distorted vision, with such venom and such deep disgust. Surely none has ever expressed himself with such recklessly misplaced emphasis. It is an old aphorism that an American who goes abroad and dislikes Europe has not stayed there long enough, while one who goes abroad and then cannot endure his own country has stayed there too long. Evidently Mr. Miller has dwelt too long on the Left Bank; he reflects that contempt for the work of painstaking citizens which, in the words of Professor Von Mises, usually characterizes bohemians. Thus bankers and brokers are described as superfluous, carnivorous swindlers, newspapers are all venal, the workers are slaves, and all the ills of the world are laid at the doors of capitalists and politicians who destroy the natural goodness of man. Mr. Miller's love of anarchy, his faith in the noble savage, his eulogy of the primitive life on American Indian reservations and his fierce hatred of the machine age will not seem new to any reader of Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism* or of Brandes' *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature*; it is astounding to see them uncritically accepted in 1942.

To Mr. Miller, the world, which has always been a battlefield, ought to be a picnic ground and would be so if it were not for the capitalists. Voltaire, it will be recalled, expected peace when the last prince had been strangled by the bowels of the last priest. We have almost achieved this goal without any appreciable resulting amelioration of man's estate. The business man is merely the latest bogey; all the altruists from the Third Earl of Shaftesbury to Bertrand Russell offer us these fraudulent explanations of why the world is not the paradise of which men dream. It is less flattering to human vanity but

more sensible to accept the conclusions of Aristotle and St. Paul that the ills of the world arise largely from the natural wickedness of men.

I don't hope to persuade Mr. Miller that America offers much beauty as well as energy and hope. Of course our life, like that of the rest of the world, has its dirty, sordid, and depressing aspects. Most of us and our ancestors have been too busy developing a continent to produce all the urbane, leisurely virtues of older cultures. Mr. Miller cannot have seen our lakes and rivers and forests, our gardens and parks and boulevards and playgrounds, our art galleries and symphony orchestras, our libraries and schools and hospitals. Has he no word of praise for our universal education, social security schemes and slum clearance projects? Do we not deserve some credit for a society in which, by President Roosevelt's own admission, two-thirds of the population are well-clad, well-housed and well-fed?

No doubt something can and will be done to make the world more beautiful and more comfortable, although it is neither possible nor desirable permanently to eliminate poverty and suffering. The unemployment problem can never be completely solved so long as indolent and incompetent people exist. But the necessary reforms of an ever-changing world must come from men who have character and education as well as humanitarian benevolence; such angry diatribes and neurotic vapourings as Mr. Miller's, such dyspepsia in the guise of *weltschmerz*, can only increase the amount of misunderstanding and hatred in the world.

Yours sincerely,

EDGAR H. AILES

Dear Sir,

19th February 1943

March 3, 1943, will be the eightieth birthday of one of the most distinguished living men of letters, Mr. Arthur Machen. His friends and admirers wish to honour the occasion by a birthday cheque, which will be of practical help to him. Subscriptions should be sent to Colin Summerford, c/o Westminster Bank, 1 Stratford Place, W.1; cheques being payable to the Arthur Machen Fund, and crossed Westminster Bank (Marylebone).

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